



SCHOOL FOUNDER DEWEY BENEFIELD AND SON JIM APPLAUD AS TIGGIE BENEFIELD IS PRESENTED WITH FLOWERS

An Address for the Dedication of Benefield Hall by Board Chairman, Lee Tompkins

We're here today to honor the Benefields for their generous contribution to Frederica Academy, and to dedicate this beautiful building that is the realization of a dream. Most of you may not know that this dream actually started almost 30 years ago, in 1969, at the home of Dewey and Tiggie Benefield. Let me re-recreate the scene for you:

It is a Sunday afternoon; Dewey is stretched out on the couch preparing for a well-deserved nap after a long week at the Sea Island Company. His beautiful young wife, Tiggie, gently approaches Dewey and quietly plants her dream in his mind- a middle school on St. Simons Island so that the children would not have to go to Brunswick when they entered the seventh grade. Not wanting to disappoint this bride, no disturb his state of semi-sleep, Dewey nods approvingly and agrees to "see about it." Taking this as her cue, Tiggie begins to stir up interest among her friends; Dewey now in a state of wakefulness, realizes this is serious business, and begins to talk up the idea to more friends.

In January, 1970, the first Board of Directors meeting was held with Mr. Dewey Benefield presiding as Chair. Frederica Academy was on its way to becoming a reality, although not on the island as Tiggie had originally hoped. The original Frederica Academy got its Start in Brunswick at the old Brunswick Hospital building in the south end of town. After many months of hard work on the part of many concerned parents, Frederica Academy opened its doors on August 31, 1970, to 108 students, grades K through eighth

A proud Dewey Benefield drove a carload of children over to the new school that first day, and probably many days thereafter. Libby Horton, our current Head of Lower School, was among the original eight teachers welcoming students on opening day.

Through the years, Frederica Academy's enrollment grew quickly. More students arrived; more and more teachers were added; the school extended through the twelfth grade; parents played an active roll in their children's education and in the school's progress. Phase II of Tiggie's dream was about to come true- on December 20, 1974, the new Frederica Academy building was dedicated at our current location on St. Simons Island. A new gym was soon added. Tremendous growth continued for many years under the leadership and guidance of Dewey Benefield, who continued to serve as chairman of the Board until 1978 (the longest tenured Chair in our history).

Now, fast forward to October 22, 1998 Today we see the final phase of Tiggie Benefield's dream-a middle school building for Frederica Academy on St. Simons Island. Over the past 28 years, the Benefield children, Him and Helen graduated from Frederica after both starting there when the school opened Now Dewey and Tiggie's three grandchildren, Jackson and Harrison in the first grade and Riley in the second grade are enrolled and will graduate with the classes of 2009 and 2010, respectively. Annually we give the James Dewey Benefield Award to each graduating senior who had attended every grade at Frederica Academy, kindergarten through 12th, (daughter Helen was the first recipient). And so today, because of Tiggie's dream and the Benefield's generosity, we gather here to dedicate our new middle school Benefield Hall...

We thank you, Dewey and Tiggie for your dreams, your hard work, your dedication, your support for over a quarter of a century, and your love of Frederica Academy.

Mr. Tompkins credits the History of Frederica Academy by Gail Manning for the history of our school included in this address.