

She'll be 1975 legislature's top woman

BY PAT MCGUIRE
News staff writer

When she first started campaigning, she was "just a joke," says Marilyn Quarles. But now folks are taking her a whole lot more seriously.

As the winner in the May 7 Democratic run-off, Marilyn becomes St. Clair County's first woman legislator and probably the state's only woman in the 1975 legislature. With no Republican opposition in the November election, the 44 year-old Springville high school teacher will go to Montgomery as the representative of House District 56, which includes St. Clair County and a part of Calhoun County. She'll be Alabama's fifth woman legislator, the most recent being Retha Deal Wynott of Gadsden who lost her race for state auditor in May.

A MATH AND science teacher at St. Clair County High School in Odenville, Marilyn has had some experience with lobbying for education during state legislative sessions. "Most of our AEA resolutions

then he had to listen to them. I didn't ask for money, I just asked for votes."

She didn't campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment because "the people in Alabama don't understand what it's all about," Marilyn believes, but she has some strong feelings about women and what they can accomplish.

"We've all been stereotyped as the homemaker, the dedicated mother, the budgeter, the peacemaker. It's time we played our role in the political arena. I believe women are a little more conscientious, a little more dedicated than men. We should be involved at the policy-making level. I think men appreciate a woman's opinion—a lot of them won't say so, but they do! The men have been wholeheartedly behind me in this campaign."



ONE OF MARILYN'S most enthusiastic campaigners has been her husband, L. D. Quarles, who owns and operates a drive-in restaurant in Springville. "He's my chief campaigner," Marilyn laughs. "He believes I could move that mountain," she says, pointing to the mountain view from her living room window.

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for him to come back here for his medicine, especially now that I'm a representative and we have such a fine medical school here."

Since she believes that "education is the key to success in any field," Marilyn hasn't stopped pursuing her own education. A graduate of Snead Junior College and the University of Alabama in Birmingham, she's now taking

school in Guenville, Marilyn has had some experience with lobbying for education during state legislative sessions. "Most of our AEA resolutions never got before the legislature," she says, "so I decided if we were ever going to get anything done, I'd have to get involved."

A strong believer in individualized education, Marilyn feels more money needs to be appropriated for education.

"But I'm not in this just for education," she quickly adds. "We need a highway system, road improvement system, something other than the monopoly-type garbage disposal operation we have here, and more home rule. Our county needs a county-wide water system, with pollution control, so we can bring more industry into our area."

She's thought a lot about land planning, too, and is familiar with the work of the Birmingham Regional Planning Commission, the newly-elected legislator says. "I know you can't hold back progress and I know what the planning commission can do to help us."

Although she'll take her seat in the legislature by virtue of winning the run-off election, Marilyn would like to see the run-offs abolished. "Something should be done about this run-off thing. It's such an expense, and the campaigns sometimes become really ugly. This last month was the hardest of all for me."

MARILYN IS enthusiastic about annual sessions of the legislature — "That way you can keep in contact with the people and know their needs" — and the new ethics legislation — "It's the greatest thing! I don't know why people are resigning over it. Why, everyone is going to invest their money; even the teachers do that!"

She turned down big campaign contributions, Marilyn says, because it would have meant she could not be her own person in the legislature. "Look at what happened to Nixon and all that Watergate mess. He took all that money from the gas companies and the milk people and ITT, and



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Marilyn "wore out a set of tires and put 7,000 miles on her car" during the campaign, L. D. says. And Marilyn quickly adds, "A lot of people voted for me that had never met me. They met 'L' when he was out campaigning for me. He was behind me 100 per cent."

A son, 20-year-old Leigh Darryl, is her "pride and joy," Marilyn says. An "A" student in pre-med at Duke University, Darryl is a graduate of Indian Springs School. "I went to work 12 years ago, mainly because of inflation and the high cost of living," Darryl's mother explains. "And I decided that if my son wanted to go to college, I had to go to work. I would love

education is the key to success in any field," Marilyn hasn't stopped pursuing her own education. A graduate of Snead Junior College and the University of Alabama in Birmingham, she's now taking some graduate courses at UAB. "I just got two "A's" in systematic planning and individualized education, and this was during my campaign," she says proudly. "Studying has never been hard for me because every night put myself to sleep reading even if it's the encyclopedia."

The state's newest woman legislator seems to have energy to spare, and isn't a timid about her new responsibilities. "I'm not afraid of anything," she smiles. "I even like to be Speaker of House. That's up for grabs, know!"

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St. Clair Educators Honored

State Representative Marilyn Quarles of Springville is pictured here presenting a dual award and citation signed by Governor George Wallace to Roy and Vera Gibson for "service rendered education in St. Clair County over a 40-year period," during a special meeting of the St. Clair County Retired Teachers Association Monday at Pell City Steakhouse. A past president of the retired teachers association and a former St. Clair County Superintendent of Education, Gibson said he felt "highly honored and very proud." The Gibsons are active in civic and community activities and are members of the First Baptist Church of Pell City. PHOTO BY AUGUST MEHL