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Famous achievers

Actor Ed Asner, left, holds his pen between his teeth as he takes a break in signing autographs at a picnic in Owensboro at the American Academy of Achievement's annual Salute to Excellence. In the picture at right, Col. Harlan

Sanders, right, who started the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants, talks with Triple Crown winning jockey Steve Cauthen. Story on Page 9.

—Staff Photos by Greg Smith

They love Cauthen

'No great student' is among greats honored at Golden Plate awards

By L.D. Seits
Press Staff Reporter
OWENSBORO

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OWENSBORO, Ky.—"I was no great student," the slight teen-ager confessed, looking out over the crowd that included almost 300 of the nation's best students.

They couldn't have cared less.

Steve Cauthen, the 18-year-old jockey from Walton, Ky., who became "racing's boy wonder" by booting home more winners in a year than any jockey in history, got as big a hand as any of the greats from half a dozen fields.

His fellow teen-agers, gathered last night just outside Owensboro as part of the Academy of Achievement's annual Salute to Excellence, whooped it up for one of their own — even though, as he explained, he had to "work hard (in high school) to get A's and B's. And some C's. And a few D's."

He'd already charmed them, telling them how impressive the academy's program was. "It's really beautiful," he said. Then, after a slight pause, "And so on and so forth."

Cauthen is 1 of 30 persons being honored this year with Golden Plate awards for outstanding achievement, and 1 of 2 receiving them last night because of their inability to be on hand tonight for the banquet scheduled for the presentations.

The other confessed to being, like Cauthen, less than an academic standout.

"I feel a little out of place," said another of the younger set's favorites, singer Debby Boone, whose hit recording of "You Light Up My Life" has set a handful of sales records.

The daughter of singer Pat Boone, she was apparently the only one on hand who thought she was out of place.

If she needed any new fans, she picked up some last night.

"I turned into a Debby Boone fan," 17-year-old David Jansing of Owensboro, a Merit Scholarship finalist, said later.

She won over Jansing and probably anyone else who needed conversion when she valiantly tried to answer the crowd's calls for her to sing her hit song.

Miss Boone answered the calls by explaining she didn't have her musicians with her.

The crowd gathered under a 60-by-70-foot tent on the Green estate just west of Owensboro kept asking, though, and when a four-piece combo at the far end of the tent struck up the melody she gave it a try.

The combo was first pitched too high, and on a second effort too low. The crowd understood her plight, and dropped its demands for the song.

But when she finished a brief speech and stepped from the dais, the combo struck up the melody again as a salute to the popular singer and, without warning, the teens in the crowd began singing along.

It was all it took to bring the singer back to the dais to sing a couple of bars with them and then offer a parting compliment: "You guys aren't bad."

The presentation of the two Golden Plates was a highlight of the evening program that also included talks by film star Olivia de Havilland and Central Intelligence Agency director Stansfield Turner, both of whom fielded questions from the crowd.

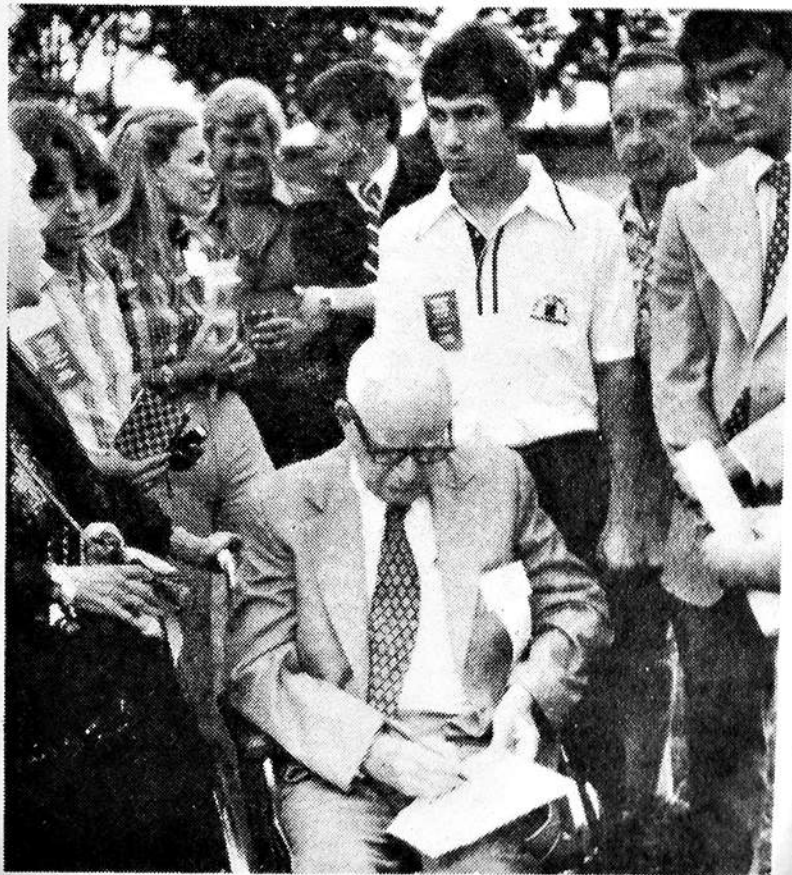
The teen-agers cheered both, as well as a growing list of the great and the famous on hand for the banquet tonight. Among them were war heroes Gen. Omar Bradley and Gen. "Jimmy" Doolittle, television

stars Edward Asner and Cloris Leachman, film star Helen Hayes, author Colleen McCullough, author and former Kennedy presidential assistant Arthur Schlesinger Jr., FBI director William Webster and Dallas Cowboys football coach Tom Landry.

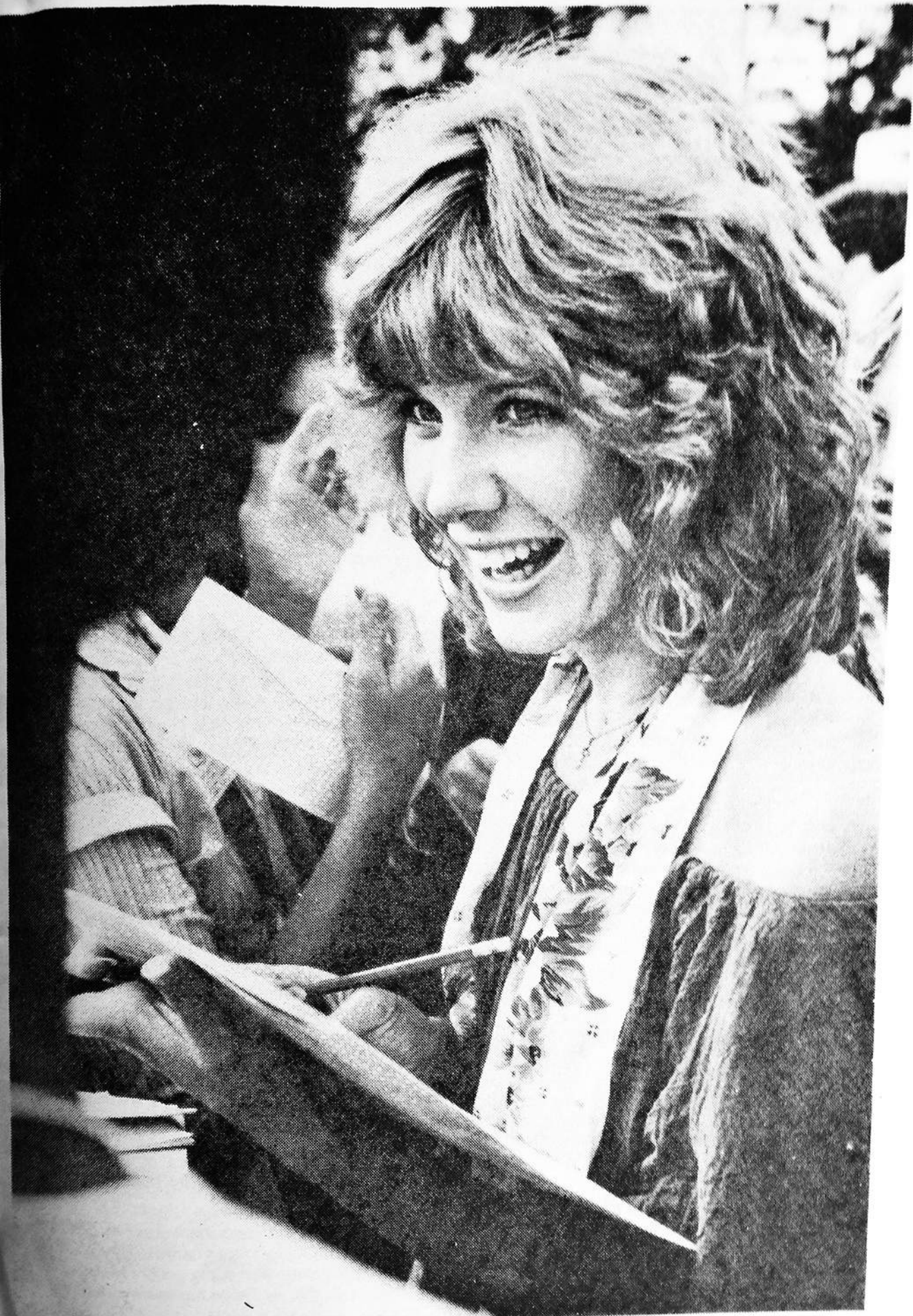
And a man who has proved as accessible to the young people as anyone there, U.S. Judge John Sirica.

It was Sirica who played a prominent role in the uncovering of the Watergate scandal, refusing to allow questions to be swept under the rug in his courtroom. It won him acclaim as a "hero" of the case and as an example of a man who refused to let the system be used politically.

He has been among the more popular figures at the three-day event that opened Thursday, shaking hands with every teen-ager that approaches him, talking with them about their plans, offering encouragement.



Gen. Omar Bradley signs autographs.



Singer Debby Boone talks with members of the crowd as she signs autographs.