
Peoria Times-Observer

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Friedan deserves a nod

Betty Friedan, whose birthday and date of death both fall on Feb. 4, never really played in Peoria — an unfortunate fact.

In her lifetime, Friedan was a pioneer in the area of women's rights.

Like many pioneers, she ruffled feathers.

In life, she was not appreciated in her hometown. She was scorned by many, ignored by the majority.

That has not really changed much in the years since her death. Such is the lot of pioneers, especially those who push in a direction that makes the majority uncomfortable.

Friedan pushed the idea that women were meant for more than housework and motherhood in the early '60s.

"The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the 20th Century in the United States," Friedan said.

"Each suburban housewife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night, she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question: 'Is this all?'"

The attitude on display in that quote from

the early '60s is the norm today.

As Friedan put this idea out there, America was in the throes of tossing off norms, but challenged attitudes often die a very hard death.

Friedan endorsed, embraced and championed the idea that women could be so much more than mothers and secretaries.

"A girl should not expect special privileges because of her sex, but neither should she adjust to prejudice and discrimination," Friedan said.

A lot of people today — male and female — would agree with that statement.

That is a huge leap in attitudes from the time Friedan uttered those words.

And, much of the credit for this attitudinal shift rests with Friedan.

Yet, in her hometown, there is nothing to indicate this great woman was from here, let alone appreciated here.

Feb. 4, Friedan's birthday, is rapidly approaching.

The time has come to show this great woman the appreciation she so richly deserves.

On Feb. 4, a tribute to Friedan is planned at the Lakeview YWCA. The event features a one-woman play and presentations.

The tribute is free and open to the public 5-7 p.m. Reservations are requested by calling 685-7655, ext. 211.