Betty Friedan: The first lady of feminism

Peoria’s least celebrated icon

By DeWayne Bartels

Betty Friedan rose to international prominence, archi-
tect of the worldwide women’s movement, a tour de force for
equality.

Yet in Peoria, Friedan is Peo-
ria’s least celebrated icon.

In contrast, when soft-rock
star Dan Fogelberg died in De-
cember 2007, plans began
immediately to find a way to
mark his passing. In September
2008, signs designating “Foge-
lobber Parkway” — an honorary street designation of Abington Street from Prospect Road to Adams Street — were
created.

Third District Councilman
Bob Manning said at the time,
“My only regret is we didn’t
do this earlier.”

Fran Kepler, who met Friedan
years ago, said there is a big
difference between Fogelberg
and Friedan, which explains
why there is such a disparity
in the marking of the passing
of each.

“She was controversial,” Ke-
pler said.

“She held up a mirror and
made us look at ourselves. People sometimes don’t like
what they see when that hap-
pens.”

Efforts underway

Dorothy Sinclair, only the
second woman to hold a seat
on the Peoria City Council, is
busily trying to create a memo-
rial for Friedan. The chosen
effort is to rename the YWCA
administration building in
memory of Friedan and the
women’s activist, said Friedan’s
importance is unrecognized in
this city.

“For a long time, I didn’t con-
sider her a hero,” Klein said.
“I was a traditional Catho-
lic. It took some time for me
to come around and recog-
nize how important she was. Like
a lot of us, it took me time to
come around and accept rad-
cal ideas.”

Klein said to Friedan’s credit,
she is still controversial.

“Everything got happened in this city from people who
were considered Klein said.

“I don’t think you estimate the same organizations like
YWCA, even by the ben-
ed by the pioneers,
ations it’s a... change minds.”

Icon

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husband and children by going
to work or volunteering.”

Kepler called Friedan the
“shaper” for the third wave of
feminism in the nation.

“She put into words what
women like we were thinking,”
kepler said.

Dolores Klein, a long-time
who was it OK to

Who is Betty Friedan?

- Betty Friedan was launched onto the world stage in 1963 with the publication of her book, “The Feminine Mystique.” The book sold, simply, women could work and volunteer outside the home and still be

- Friedan was born Feb. 4, 1921 as Betty Naomi Goldstein in Peoria. Her parents were Jewish.

- Friedan graduated summae summae from Smith College in 1942. She received a research fund to study psychology at a graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley.

- Her first book, “The Feminine Mystique,” became a national best seller and propelled her to the leadership of the women’s liberation movement.

- In 1966, she founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), and became its first president.

- In 1971, Friedan helped form the National Women’s Political Caucus, for feminists who seek to change the traditional political structure.