

# Miss Betty Blake keeps ghost of Mark Twain alive

The following article by Viger H. Seelen, Cincinnati Enquirer feature writer, was published May 27 in the Enquirer. Miss Blake is the daughter of Senator and Mrs. Stanley Blake.

As she did in 1970, Miss Blake will wear a campaign to convince Congress to let the majestic old steamboat continue to ply the muddy Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

The slim, attractive boat line executive started with Green Line in 1962. But before that it was an adventurous climb through the world of public relations.

"When I first came to Cincinnati in 1962, I worked at WJW television for promotion and talent.

"Television promotion gave me a taste of sales. I was dissatisfied with my work as a friend told me about Steamer Avalon Inc., which now owns the Belle of Louisville, which lost to the Delta Queen in their annual race this spring in Cincinnati.

"I asked the president if I could charter hours in 17 states and work on commission.

"He thought I was crazy and laughed at me, but said okay. My brother let me use his car while he was with the Air Force," said the petite brunette.

"The first place Miss Blake went on her sales expedition was St. Paul, Minn. She rented a telephone in a telephone answering service and stayed all night.

making calls and typing contracts. The clients bought her contracts.

"People really relate to the Delta Queen. It's not a bad. Passengers who come on the boat say it's like going back to their alma mater.

"When the crew cuts the line, it affects everybody on the boat. Kind of like they have cut the line from the entire world. The pace of the big wheel, and the boat itself shows them down," she said.

Miss Blake says plans for a new \$3.5 million steamboat are in the making. There will be a contest to name the new boat.

"Captain Ernest Wagner of the Delta Queen really told me about Steamer Avalon Inc. The company was going down the river to Louisville and it did not have a job," explained Miss Blake. "I know every town and every river bank, a friend put me on the track to the Delta Queen."

I went to the Green Line Steamers and asked for the president. My first office was on a dingy water boat.

I took her two years to raise occupancy on the Delta Queen from about 50 percent to 88 per cent. It has a capacity for 192 passengers and 75 crew members.

In 1967 she was put in charge of marketing. She has been the general manager since 1971 and is the company's board of directors.

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Steele graduates with honors

On May 31, 1973 Douglas Steele, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Steele, graduated with honors from Gateway High School, Morgoville, Pa.

Douglas also received the Social Studies award and was a member of the Student Government, National Honor Society, March Chorus and the Senior Choir of which he was president.

Ms. Steele formally Ruth Mae Cunningham of Carlisle, is the daughter of the late Rev. and Mrs. S. H. Cunningham, Rev. Cunningham was a minister of the Carlisle Christian Church.

In September 1973 Douglas will enter Grove City College, a small coeducational Christian college about 60 miles from Pittsburgh, Pa.

Miss Blake has received many honors in her twelve public relations career including the "Comie Award" (conservation, preservation and beautification of man's environment from the Society of American Travel Writers).

She also is a Kentucky Colonel, Dutchess of Paducah, Ky., honorary citizen of New Orleans, La. She was appointed Dutchess of Delta Queen Scene at the Winter Carnival in St. Paul, Minn., and was former president of the Cincinnati Public Relations Association.

Miss Blake speaks to clubs about the Delta Queen and travels a lot with the boat. She says it is a big part of her life. I just learned to swim last year and I love it. I like to go fishing and snorkeling. I cook a lot of the things my mother used to cook. I find it's comforting," she said.

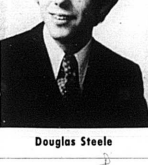
"My mother named me Betty Blake after Will Rogers' wife, and as a child, I always used to wish I had a middle name because I was raised in Carlisle, and all my friends had two names. Just now I'm glad my name is so simple."

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Douglas Steele



Douglas Steele



Miss Betty Blake (center) is surrounded by friends and family as she launches the Delta Queen steamboat in Cincinnati.



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