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Black woman the first to receive MBA here

by Susan Poole
Battalion Reporter

Melba Robinson Pratt, who will receive her master of business administration degree Saturday, will be the first black woman to graduate from Texas A&M with a MBA since the University admitted women in 1963.

"It feels good to be finished," she says. "It has been a long hard struggle. I'm proud to be the first one but it is rather sad that it took 20 years for one black woman to graduate with an MBA."

Pratt is originally from Tuskegee, Ala., where she received a bachelor of science degree in social work from the Tuskegee Institute in 1976. Her husband Edwin is a physician at the Owens-Franklin Health Center at Prairie View A&M.

Pratt is not only a wife and student, but also a mother of two girls—Khalilah, 5, and Cheri, 9. Support from her family is what she says has helped her the most.

"My husband has been very supportive of me," Pratt says. "He helps take care of the children and understands when I'm under pressure — especially around exam time."

were supportive of her.

"Traditionally the black family has been close knit and supportive," she said. "My parents were always motivating my three sisters and me to achieve our best. We help each other to attain our goals."

Pratt hasn't had any major problems being the only black woman in the MBA program but she said she personally has felt more pressure. Her biggest problem was trying to budget her time between her family and studying.

"When women are going to school they need someone to socialize with," Pratt said. "It is hard to get through a graduate program and you need your social support systems."

Black women interested in receiving a graduate degree must be committed, Pratt said. Her advice to mothers is to pick the right time to go back to school to avoid the extra strain it can put on the family.

"More black women should consider going back to school," she said. "It is harder with children but it is something that can be done."

Pratt plans to move to Chicago in June. While her husband finishes his residency, she plans



Melba Robinson

to look for a job in a management development program.

"I'm more people oriented, and since I do have a degree in social work I would like to work in management development and training," she said. "They rotate you through different jobs so you can pin-point what you want to do."

When her husband finishes his psychiatric residency program she plans to help him establish his private psychiatric practice and possibly start a business of her own.

Student wins pageant

Michele Pierre, secretary of the Texas A&M Black Awareness Committee, won first place in the senior division of the first Miss Ebonness Pageant April 30 in Brenham.

The regional contest was divided into two groups, the junior division for ages 13 to 16 and the senior division for ages 16 to 22.

Twenty-two contestants from

Brenham, Giddings, Somerville and College Station participated in the pageant. Both a junior and a senior queen were named.

The competition was based on personality — 50 percent, beauty — 20 percent, poise — 20 percent and talent — 10 percent.

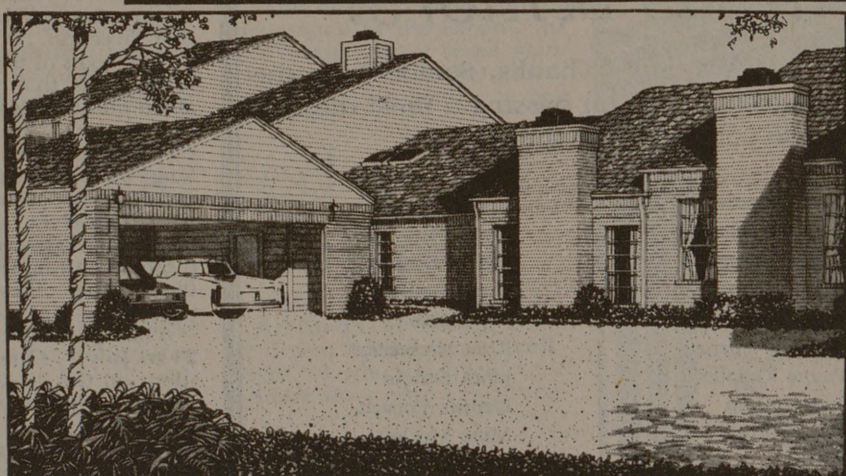
Pierre, a junior modern languages major, said she is glad

she won senior queen because it will help her establish herself in modeling.

"Winning the pageant will enable me to make contacts with agents in the modeling field since I'm scheduled to make guest appearances," she said.

Other prizes Pierre received included a scholarship, a diamond ring, a trophy and a crown.

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Marfa rodeo to close to watch Marfa run

United Press International
MARFA — When the "Call to the Post" is trumpeted at Churchill Downs and horses start moving into the gates for the Kentucky Derby this Saturday, the centennial rodeo in Marfa, Texas is going to come to a halt.

Around this West Texas city's rodeo arena have been placed 10 rented television sets, all of which will be tuned in to the 2-minute race in Louisville.

The folks in Marfa aren't really that keen on horse racing, they are just big on this particular race.

The betting line out of Las Vegas shows a 7-2 preference for a big gray colt named "March" and, in the city the horse is named for, the gap is a whole lot wider.

"We've been told we're the leading contender," Chamber of Commerce manager Jerry Dickson said. "We feel pretty honored by the whole thing."

Marfa, the horse, is owned by L.B. French Jr. — a wealthy horse breeder with two ranches outside Marfa, the city.

The city, a town of about 1,000 residents 175 miles southeast of El Paso, is having its centennial celebration this weekend. That the Derby is being held at the same time is a coincidence but one that local residents are fully prepared to take advantage of.

"During the time (TV) race coverage begins we'll be having our ranch rodeo," Dickson said. "We have 10 TVs rented and we're placing them all around the arena so people can watch the race."

Because Marfans are behind Marfa all the way, the ABC television network has decided to put cameras on location at the Marfa rodeo. Periodically during Derby day coverage, Dickson said the network would be cutting away to the town for live

spots with local people.

Between 3,000 and 4,000 people are expected to attend the celebration that starts Friday in Marfa.

But while Marfa is enthusiastic about Marfa, most residents are keeping it in perspective. After all, it's not the most famous thing to ever happen to the town.

The Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor epic movie "Giant" was filmed on location in Marfa. And periodically scientists are called upon to disclaim UFO stories about the "Marfa lights" that mysteriously appear over the nearby Davis Mountains.

And, of course, it's not even the first time a horse named Marfa has achieved fame.

"My father had a horse named Marfa that he sold in 1935 to a man named Dwight Murphy in Santa Barbara, Calif.," said Helen Mitchell. "That horse was in the Rose Bowl parade once."

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