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SPECIAL TO TIMES UNION COLUMNISTS WINI RIDER, DAVID CRUMPLER

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SUBJECT: FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN ANN SOTHERN AND DR. KINNE For Immediate Release

She hadn't faced a movie camera in 13 years but her comeback role in The Whales of August has won Ann Sothern an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actress. But that comes as no surprise to long-time friend President Frances Bartlett Kinne of Jacksonville University. Dr. Kinne called Ann recently (Feb. 21) at her home in Ketchum, Idaho, to congratulate her. "I told her how excited we were that she was nominated. She's a good friend and a lovely person and it's nice to see her being recognized. She's a fine actress and I hope she wins it," said Dr. Kinne.

Best known for her film work during the '40s and '50s in the movies (as the scatterbrained blonde of the Maisie films) and on TV (Private Secretary and The Ann Sothern Show), Sothern first met JU's president in 1974 while performing in "Everybody Loves Opal" at Jacksonville's old Thunderbird Dinner Theatre. She was nearly crippled when some scenery fell on her during the show. That accident affected her career, said Dr. Kinne, who was in the audience and later testified at her trial. "She couldn't work for quite awhile afterwards, and she still suffers back and leg problems," said Dr. Kinne.

Ann Sothern's ties to JU go even deeper. She donated over 100 of her films (including Maisie and Private Secretary) to JU and twice conducted seminars for students during the early '70s. Interestingly, three of the students in those seminars have gone on to their own theatrical fame: Debbie Casperson '75 entertains on cruise ships out of Miami; Lisa Clarson '75 is working in film and video in Hollywood; and Jay Jackson '76 is with a repertory theatre in Boston.

"Ann told me she'd like to come back to JU," said Dr. Kinne, "but it depends on her health. There's a festival of her films planned in Santa Barbara in March. Wouldn't it be nice to do an Ann Sothern film festival at JU when she returns?"

The Whales of August also stars veteran actors Lillian Gish, Bette Davis, and Vincent Price. It should play in Jacksonville sometime in March. If you want to root for Sothern at the Oscar awards, it's April 11.

(For your info: There's a current interview with Ann Sothern in People Weekly, Feb. 29, 1988. It describes the accident in Jacksonville in more detail.)