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## 'Coco' Siewert lives to give

by Diane K. Bert  
Correspondent

Eleanor "Coco" Siewert was bubbling with enthusiasm about her weekend with symphony volunteers from all over the nation. "They were so impressed with Detroit, the beauty of the suburbs in bloom, their warm welcome and the happy people they saw," Siewert said.

She has served as a professional parliamentarian with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Council and helped as other councils visited. Siewert has many adventures as she assists agencies, organizations and municipalities with procedural advice and training. Her workshops are beneficial for staff and board members. Topics include "Chairing a Smooth Meeting," "Quick Tips for a Successful Meeting" or "Motions That Don't Hurt." Her pleasant manner and bank of knowledge make her a sought after resource person.

Since Siewert and her husband, Robert, came to Birmingham in 1967, she has evolved into a major asset to the community. From Girl Scout leader to Library Board member to service on boards, study committees and the city commission, she has offered her energy and insights with enthusiasm and competence.

She served as mayor of Birmingham in 1988-89 and 1995-96. Recipient of many awards, Siewert cited the most unusual one. When she served on the Combined Seweroverflow Partnerships of America Board of Directors, Siewert requested information from a colleague in New York. Unfortunately, he lost her card and sent the information to "The Sewer Queen of Birmingham." It did get to her.

This incident resulted in teasing and the dedication of a rest area at Lincoln Hills Golf Course to "The Sewer Queen, Eleanor 'Coco' Siewert."

In a more usual manner, she has been named First Citizen of Birmingham and A Phenomenal Woman by the Junior League of Birmingham, as well as receiving myriad other accolades.

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As a professional parliamentarian, Siewert must pass rigorous tests. In this role, she assists organizations in using procedures in compliance with their by-laws or Robert's Rules of Order. "I attend when procedural help is needed," Siewert said.

Many groups she sees get bogged down in discussions and take no action. She educates them. One participant said, "Thank you. You helped us so much. We set an agenda and accomplished our goals. I think that is great."

In her professional career, Siewert served as special assistant for external affairs for President David Adamany of Wayne State University. She also worked for the dean of the law school. She earned a second master's degree in dispute resolution.

Siewert and her husband have been fine partners in public service, from Scouts to athletics to civic leadership. He has always encouraged her community involvement. Robert Siewert has many fond

memories of events they shared, such as weddings she conducted when she was mayor. "Now that I am retired, I can drive and go with her as she travels," he said. "With Coco, there is never a dull moment."

As their three children grew, the Siewert family had adventures camping in the United States and broadened this into international trips. They trekked in Nepal, visited China, Turkey, Europe and Morocco. "We sought out cultural explorations and nature studies," Siewert said.

These international travels made the Siewerts natural hosts for the International Visitors Council of Detroit. They have hosted many guests from the former Soviet Union countries here to learn about some aspect of life in the U.S.

These guests are persons who are well-established in careers in their home countries. One group was interested in accident prevention. The most recent group was special educators from Armenia.

"I make arrangements for them to visit sites and people who share their interest. It is rewarding," Siewert said. "We always receive more from them than we give. We learn about their lives, religions, the doctrines under which they live, their language, foods and culture.

"We are sad when they leave," she added. "Our perceptions about how we live are heightened by their observations about the way we live."

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