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## **Her ‘Girl Talk’ tour stops at James Maskus Auditorium Saturday night**

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

As a preacher’s kid growing up in South Carolina, Chonda Pierce was provided with a hilarious arsenal of material that appealed to both church goers and others alike.

With laser-sharp wit, Pierce has been entertaining audiences from coast to coast for nearly more than a decade, and she has parlayed her gift for storytelling into a multi-faceted career.

This Saturday, the comedian will make her way to the stage of Liberal High School's James Maskus Auditorium as part of a tour promoting her DVD, "Girl Talk."

The show begins at 7 p.m., and Pierce said she has high hopes for performing in front of a western Kansas audience.

"I'm a comedian, so hopefully, I'm going to make people laugh," she said. "It's going to be a long night if nobody does. I'll be back on the bus and out of there really quick if nobody laughs."

Pierce has been at the comedy craft for nearly 20 years, and she said staying in the business for that long requires a lot of creativity.

"Every time you tour, you try to come up with something new or something that makes it just as much interesting for me as it does anyone else," she said.

Saturday's show, one of the last nights on the Girl Talk tour, has been scripted much like a talk show.

"You come out and do an opening monologue, and you have some sketches," Pierce said.

She said, though, she does not do sketches such as the Top 10 list seen on The Late Show with David Letterman, but she may do a modified version of it.

“I have ADD, so I get bored,” Pierce said. “We do have a top five. I have special guests. It has really turned out to be quite fun.”

Pierce said having knowledgeable people in the crowd really helps in the comedy field.

“You pray that your audience remembers you from the last tour, the last time you were rolling through town or something they saw on television,” she said. “I’m really excited about the ‘Girl Talk’ tour.”

Pierce said the majority of her audience are women, and naturally, one of her favorite things to do is talk about men. She said, however, there are tricks to getting away with doing so.

“My mama would say, ‘In Jesus’ name,’” she said. “If you add ‘In Jesus’ name,’ you can get by with saying a lot.”

Pierce got her start in comedy under the influence of the late comedian Minnie Pearl.

“She was just a wonderful character from here in my hometown in Nashville,” she said. “I got a job impersonating her when I was a college kid. It was just more of a thrill to hear people laugh than it was to hear them applaud after a song. It just really resonated with me, and I loved it.”

In her younger days, Pierce said she also enjoyed the comedy stylings of Bill Cosby and Carol Burnett.

“I was the type of kid that stared at the TV when Bill Cosby was telling a story, when Carol Burnett was on,” she said. “Those were always my comedic heroes.”

Pierce said growing up in a church, though, made it somewhat difficult to catch those comedic

acts.

“When you grow up a preacher’s kid, you gotta really sneak and watch TV,” she said.

Pierce said, to her recollection, this is her first time in Liberal.

“I remember places by the food and what the building looked like,” she said. “I’ve been to Kansas a lot. I just don’t know if I’ve been to Liberal. I think that’s a hilarious name of a town.”

Pierce said, jokingly, she will wait to see how Saturday’s show goes before determining who is responsible for putting Liberal as a stop on the Girl Talk tour.

“Concert promoters do that, so I can’t say that I take the credit,” she said. “I take the credit if it turns out really, really great. If it doesn’t, those crazy promoters.”

The Girl Talk tour is winding down, and Pierce said things should be wrapping up later this month.

“We’ve been everywhere,” she said. “I think this’ll be about our 53rd show. I usually take most of the winters and the summers off. I always do that with my kids. We’ll be coming through Lubbock, Texas. We’ll go to Liberal, and then we’ll go back to Texas. I’m kind of all in that west area until almost Thanksgiving Day, and then I’m done.”

Pierce said getting to this point in the tour makes a performer “slap happy,” and she feels this might come through in her show Saturday evening.

“No telling what will happen,” she said. “It could be the last show of my career.”

But no matter what happens, Pierce said she is looking forward to coming to Southwest Kansas.

“I hope I see everybody in Liberal,” she said.

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