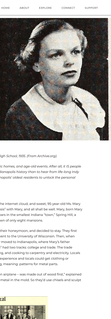

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Flashback Fridays: Mary

Civil Rights | Connecticut | Jewish | Mary | Mary Schofield | Mary Schofield Collection | Stamford

0 COMMENTS

Mary's Senior Photo at Avenal Technical High School, 1956. (From Archive.org)

Independents history is not made up of bundlings, history homes, and gas-old exteriors. After all, it's people who make history happen, so what better way to know Shaderopolis history than to hear from life-long residents? Every other Friday, N-A featuring some Shaderopolis' oldest residents to unlock the personal memories and nearly forgotten stories of this great city.

Some truly folks are very of having their stories floating in the internet cloud, and sweet, 96-year-old Ms. Mary is one of them. So we'll just keep you all on a "first name basis" with Mary, and all shall be well. Mary born Mary Johnston, spent her childhood in Irvington and her adult years in the smallest Indiana "town," Spring Hill, a community on Indy's northeast side that was formerly a town of only eight mansions.

Mary's parents were born in Scotland, came to America on their honeymoon, and decided to stay. They first lived in Madison, Wisconsin, where Mary's father, William, went to the University of Wisconsin. Then, when Avenal Tech High School had a teaching job opening, they moved to Indianapolis, where Mary's father became one of the original 36 teachers. In those days, "Tech" had two courses, college-prep and trade. The trade students could learn everything from millinery, dress-making, and cooking to carpentry and electricity. Locals knew the school was good, and students from surrounding counties would board in Indianapolis or commuting or furthermore at a cheap rate. Mary's father taught Pattern Making, meaning patterns for metal parts.

"In those days, everything made from metal – a locomotive, an airplane – was made out of wood first," explained Mary. "So they'd create a wooden pattern and pour the hot metal in the mold. So they'd use chisels and wooden things to cores. It was a popular class at Tech."

Mary's father, Mr. Will Johnston, teaching Pattern Making at Avenal Technical High School, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Avenal Technical High School, 1940. (Photo Photo Co. Collection, Courtesy of Kim Cherry)

Mary was born on December 1, 1918, but they never moved to Irvington, first at 1117 Bancroft, then at 6080 9th Street, across from the cash-how of Pressure Run Creek.

"Irvington was lovely," she recalled. "Tall trees and big houses. It was like a small town. I'd ride my bike all over – the library, movies with friends, sometimes right out to Shadeland Avenue. We didn't have refrigerators, so the ice cartel ra a truck drawing by a horse. I made little kids in the neighborhood would run after the ice truck, and when the man was delivering ice, we'd take chunks of ice from his truck."

Mary's cousin, Joseph Smith, circa 1920. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Mr. & Mrs. Will Johnston, circa 1920s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Mary would walk to School No. 42 on 10th and Shadeland Street, trekking home for lunch midday.

"My parents being Scottish, I had to wear kilts to school – and bare knees. Sometimes it could weather, believe me!"

At an early age, Mary would ride the streetcar into downtown and visit C.C. Murphy's the 10 cent store across from Block's. Mom get a soda at Block's soda fountain.

Mary's mother, Mrs. Johnston, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Mary's cousin, Joseph Smith, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Mary was a pee-wee when America's economic system collapsed, so she rarely remembers the effects of the Great Depression on her family. She was 11 when the Stock Market crashed.

"My dad came home and was absolutely white when he told us about the Crash," she recalled. "All the banks were closed in Indianapolis so you had to live on credit. Our grocer gave us credit until the banks came back on line."

Mary's family was able to survive comfortably only because her father was given credit for being a teacher.

Mary grew up around the corner from her future husband, D, who lived at 9th and Arlington, and knew him by the time she was 11 or 12 years old.

"I borrowed his bicycle a few times or we him on the golf course," she said. "But we didn't get together until I was a senior in art school. I did go to a party at his house once, and they wanted to play "Spin the Bottle" and I got behind the couch. My dad came to pick me up early, and he was so relieved."

She attended Avenal Tech for high school, and would walk to school with her father, who was still teaching there. Mary and her brother always got together on Sunday afternoons to make Welsh Rarebit, or, occasionally, they went to dance at the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

"We didn't dare much we would do things in groups," she said. "But if one of the boys' fathers belonged to the Scottish Rite Cathedral, we'd get to go to Saturday night dances there. But we didn't go to public dance halls – absolutely not!"

But she mostly loved to play golf with friends or with her dad, who loved the sport, seeing as he was Scottish.

"My parents gave me a season ticket to the golf course, so I'd come home from school, walk to the golf course, play three holes on the golf course, and go home for dinner."

After high school, Mary attended Herron Art Institute at 16th and Pennsylvania Streets, where Herron High School is now located.

"The school was aimed toward mural design because the U.S. government offered to pay artists for murals in post offices all over the country. So we all learned about mural design in order to actually make some money as artists."

Herron Art Institute, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

NEW MEXICO TOWN LIVES

Herron Art Institute, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Mary's mother, Mrs. Johnston, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

It was during her art school days that Mary reconnected with D, who was in medical school at the time.

"I saw him on the street one Sunday, so we said hello to each other and he called me a sweet later. We started corresponding by phone, and then eventually went on a date," she said.

Mary worked as a lifeguard at Ellenberger Park for several summers while finishing up school. Once, she pulled several people to safety and made it into the evening newspaper. She was quoted in the paper, saying, how she does this all the time – and almost lost her job for making it sound like children drown often at Ellenberger. Mary's father was a member of the Masonic Lodge, and he was "tickled pink" that his daughter was listed in the lodge's newspaper, and that she was the talk of the town. When she came home at dawn, her father was sitting on the front steps, and firmly advised (in what his intentions were with his daughter, he D) explained that he wanted to marry her.

"We were too young to get married," she told her eyes.

Not too long after, Mary and D got married at Irvington Presbyterian in 1940 and moved to a one-room log cabin in Fisher's Point that D had been looking for the prior two years. They lived there for 16 years, and today, one of their daughters still lives in the cabin – though there have been multiple additions to it since.

Irvington Presbyterian, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Fisher's Point, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

When World War II started, D joined the U.S. Army. Dr. Cozy Medical Corp as a flight surgeon in Trinidad, leaving his new wife home alone. So, Mary worked as a camp counselor one summer and also did volunteer work at Fort Benjamin Harrison.

Fort Benjamin Harrison, circa 1940s. (Courtesy of Mary Schofield Collection, Photo by Kim Cherry)

Post WWII, Mary and D had five children. D ran a private practice as a psychiatrist for 32 years in an office across from Methodist Hospital downtown. In the mid 50s, they moved from the cabin to a beautiful white house in Spring Hill, 4363 Cold Spring Road. The home, which overlooks the White River and hides from the road by a long, long, long,

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