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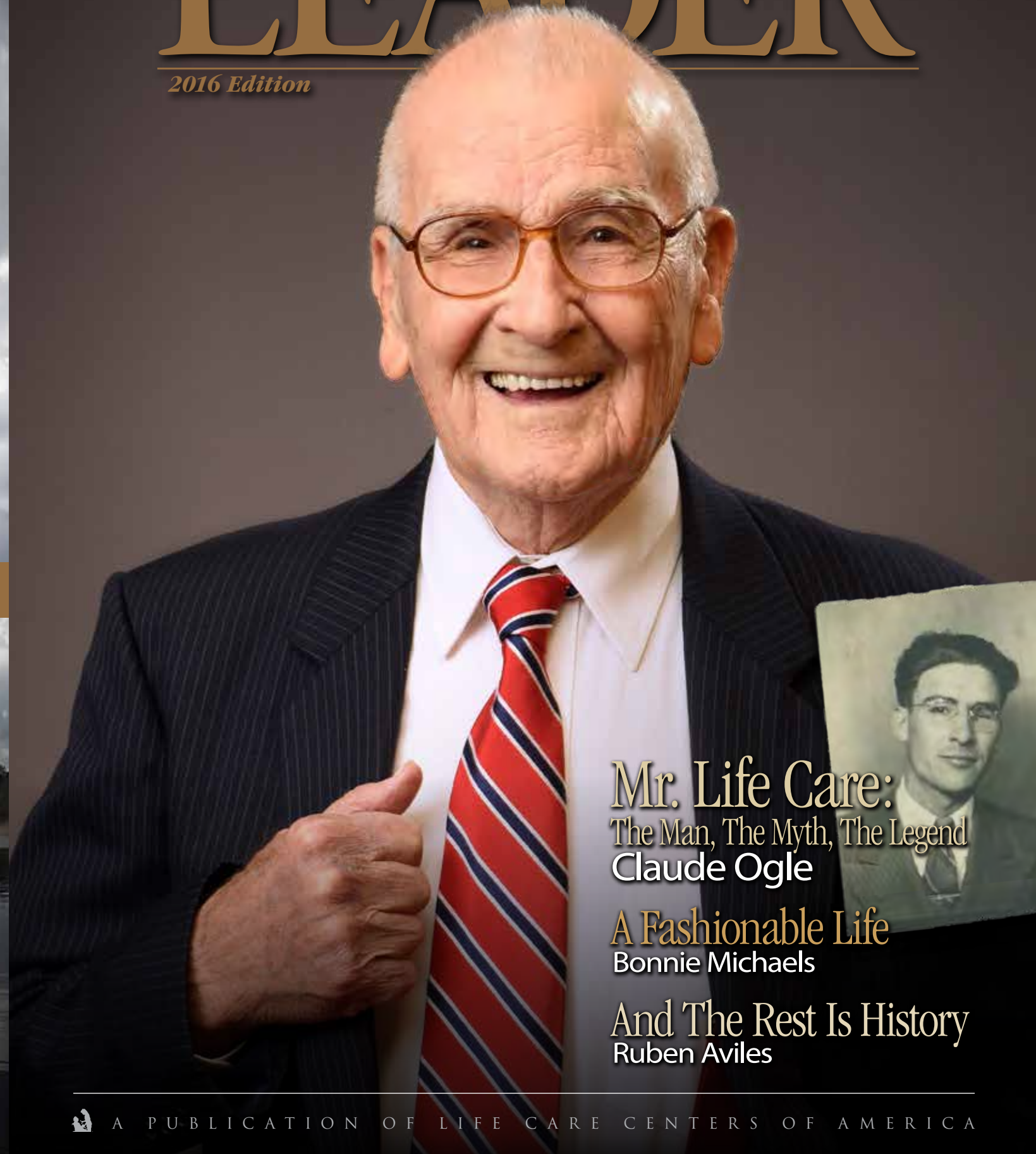
LIFE CARE CENTERS OF AMERICA 1976 – 2016

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LIFE CARE
LEADER

2016 Edition



Mr. Life Care:
The Man, The Myth, The Legend
Claude Ogle

A Fashionable Life
Bonnie Michaels

And The Rest Is History
Ruben Aviles

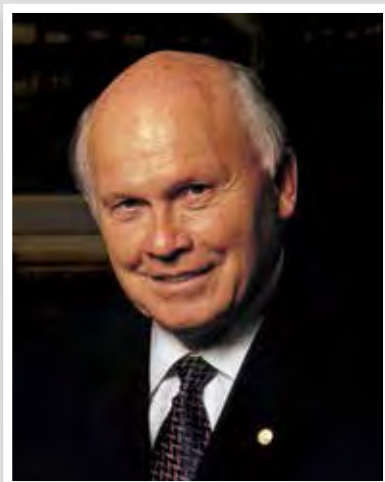
CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

The Finger Lakes is a group of 11 long, narrow, roughly north-south lakes in Central New York and a popular tourist destination. The lakes' shapes reminded early map-makers of human fingers, and the name stuck.

The village of Clifton Springs (population 2,000-plus) is situated in the Finger Lakes district. The town is known for its rolling hills and tranquil waters, and it is named for the mineral springs that were used by generations of Native Americans. They believed the waters provided healing as well as the therapies of relaxation and rejuvenation.

In 1849, the development of the area was slow until Dr. Henry Foster came looking for a place to begin his water cure. The field of medicine was just beginning, and he thought that the Sulphur Springs, as it was once called, together with a strong religious revival could restore many to active and useful lives. He believed in the interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit.

From around the world, people trekked to his Clifton Springs Sanitarium to regain their health. After Dr. Foster's death, visitors to the sanitarium would often ask one of his co-workers for the secret of the man's life and wisdom. Dr.



Foster had always exhibited an unusual grip on God's will and ways.

The co-worker would take the visitor upstairs to Dr. Foster's former office and point to two ragged holes in the carpet worn out by the doctor's knees. "That, sir, was the secret of Henry Foster's power and wisdom in the things of God and man."

Although none of our facilities is located near "healing waters of sulphur springs," our mission is not unlike that of Dr. Foster. We, too, recognize the interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit.

Through the professional talents honed by study and experience, the very latest in technological resources and modern medicine, we are able to bring healing to the body and assurance, hope and peace to the mind. But we

also understand that there are spiritual needs of the people we serve.

These can be addressed in a number of ways:

1. Listening, really listening, as our patients and residents verbalize the concerns of their heart. Such action is therapeutic.
2. Providing Bibles and religious study materials through the libraries of our facilities.
3. Spiritual counseling by ministers or other professionals as needed.
4. Bible studies and worship services conducted in the center by various denominations.
5. Living out our own faith before them through service.

And what about us?

God often imparts His will to us in an atmosphere of prayer. Guidance doesn't usually come on the run. We must wait before the Lord until He teaches us His marvelous ways and plans. 🙏

FORREST L. PRESTON
Chairman



Cover photo by David Smith

Life Care Leader is published annually by Life Care Centers of America for our residents, the corporate family and friends of Life Care.

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Photo by David Smith

BONNIE SIMEK



The Ties That Bind

By Hannah Buckingham

“At the end of the day, I’m just a mother,” declared Bonnie Simek, a petite woman with an infectious smile and obvious spunk.

To say that Simek is being modest is a great understatement. A natural adventurer, she’s lived a life abundant in courage and risk-taking. From traveling the world to finding love at first sight, Simek’s life tells a story of bravery, relentless positivity and the power of family and following your heart.

Born in the rural town of Charlotte, Michigan, in 1927, Simek knew the value of family togetherness and hard work at an early age. When the Great Depression wreaked havoc upon the small community, Simek’s parents both left their duties at the family farm in order to provide more income. Simek’s father, Lee, traveled to neighboring communities to sell milk, and his wife, Marie, worked at a small bakery. Simek and her three siblings took over the farm, and she fondly remembers her father’s initial doubt that she could handle some of the more strenuous tasks.

“My dad said he needed a field taken care of, and so I told him I’d plow it,” recalled Simek. “He said, ‘You’ve got to be real careful that you don’t run into the fence,’ and I thought, ‘I’m not going to run into the fence!’ I did the plow job twice in one day, and he couldn’t believe it. He said, ‘You must’ve been running!’ and I said, ‘I was running... Right behind the horses!’”



“I told them, ‘It’s in here,’” said Simek, pointing to her heart.



Simek’s adventurous spirit continued to grow with age, and at 18, she agreed to marry a man she had only known for two days.

Alfred LeDoux, an Air Force bomber pilot, was at the Michigan State Fair recruiting for the war effort when he noticed, and was immediately smitten with, young Simek. She also took notice of the handsome

pilot, and soon the two struck up a conversation and agreed to go on a date. One date and 48 hours later, LeDoux proposed, and without hesitation, Simek said yes.

At first, Simek’s friends and family had reservations about the sudden proposal, but when they questioned her about how she knew he was “the one,” her explanation was simple.

“I told them, ‘It’s in here,’” said Simek, pointing to her heart.

It just so happened that Simek’s intuition was right on the money, and her 47-year-long adventure with LeDoux was just beginning.

LeDoux’s position in the military required the couple to relocate often. So often in fact, that Simek can account for 66 moves throughout her lifetime.

“Sometimes we wouldn’t even stay somewhere long enough for me to put up drapes,” laughed Simek.

Though Simek loved the new experiences and friendships that frequent travel brought to her life, having a husband in the military during wartime came with its fair share of difficulties.

The couple had been married less than three years when LeDoux was sent to Korea for a tour of duty. Simek moved back in with her parents so that they could help her care for the couple's firstborn son, Chris, who had just turned 2. LeDoux's deployment lasted 18 months, and with his limited access to any sort of phone, he relied on writing letters to communicate with Simek.

"I finally decided that I was going to find a way to talk to him because I never



knew from one day to the next if he was alive," said Simek. "Back at that time, they had to connect everything from telephone lines underwater and then let you know if you could talk to somebody at that time or not, so I gave them the time I wanted to talk to him and the date. I talked to him for just a short, short time, and it cost \$75."

When LeDoux returned from Korea, he gently scolded Simek for spending that much money on one phone call, to which she quickly replied, "I knew right then that you were alive – that was worth it."

In 1952, the couple gave birth to their second son, Mike, and shortly thereafter, LeDoux was assigned to a post in Evreux, France. This time, Simek and her sons joined him overseas.

"France sounds romantic for people who have never been there," said Simek. "Well at that time, they were just starting the air base. We lived in a mobile home, which was set on mud. Our driveway was mud, and the road was mud too."



Despite the less than desirable living quarters, Simek loved experiencing a new culture and treasured the memories she made with her husband and their two young sons.

"Did I like it?" mused Simek. "I loved it. I loved it because we were all together, and that's what was important."

Following the family's three years in France, they moved for a short time to Pennsylvania, where the couple's daughter, Jeanne, was born in 1959.

"When Jeanne was born, I told my husband, 'Our cup runneth over,'" said Simek. "When he asked me what I meant, I told him, 'We got a little girl!'"

The Ledouxes left Pennsylvania for Mississippi and then relocated to Texas, the state that would birth the family's adventures in the rodeo circuit and music industry.

When Simek and her husband encouraged their children to become involved in a youth rodeo association, they could not have fathomed the journey that lay ahead. Though Mike and Jeanne enjoyed competing, it was Chris who developed a devoted passion for the high-intensity sport. A natural talent, he won the all-around title in the first rodeo he entered. After winning multiple titles at the high school

and collegiate levels, he won the world championship in bareback riding at the National Finals Rodeo in 1976.

Intertwined with his love for rodeo was Chris' love of music, another passion Simek and her husband wholeheartedly encouraged him to pursue. When the family moved to Wyoming, Chris began to write classic country songs that he would perform during his rodeo travels. His songs became widely popular among his friends, and many requested recordings of his music.

When LeDoux left the military and accepted a high-ranking position with the American Cancer Society, the family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he began to search for music labels that would sign Chris.

"Dad had talked to a bunch of people about getting Chris in a studio or taking Chris on, but Nashville didn't really understand the Western type of music," said Jeanne. "So Dad rented a studio, rented some musicians, and Chris recorded his first album."

The entire family quickly jumped on board to help Chris sell his music at rodeos, farmer co-ops and various small businesses. The endeavor quickly grew into a thriving family

business, and before long, they had produced 27 albums.

The family's hard work paid off, and in 1989, Chris signed with Capitol Records in Nashville. What started out as a small-scale family project resulted in an award-winning career for Chris, including a platinum album, two gold albums, a Grammy nomination



and the Academy of Country Music Pioneer Award.

The determined spirit and tenacity that Simek poured into the birth of Chris' music career were qualities she instilled in all three of her children as she motivated all of them to fearlessly follow their dreams.

"She gave us freedom, which was nice," said Jeanne. "She

let us figure ourselves out and never kept us under her thumb."

Mike opened a successful seafood market in Coos Bay, Oregon, and prides himself in supplying high-quality local seafood to help boost the community's economy.

Simek's eyes light up whenever she talks about visiting the Oregon coastline.

"When Mike buys seafood, he purchases it by the tons," laughed Simek. "I can't imagine buying a ton of anything."

An avid gardener, Simek also passed on her love and appreciation of nature to her children. Jeanne has purchased her own farm in Seymour, Tennessee. It produces naturally grown produce free of chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

"Mom has given us a love of travel and the outdoors," said Jeanne. "Growing up, she didn't let us play in the house. We were outside, and it was perfect. She's

taught me to love gardening and adventure."

Perhaps it is also Simek's steady positivity that has motivated her children to pursue life with passion and excellence.

"You always have to have a positive outlook on life," said Simek. "Sure, things will happen, but you pick yourself up and keep going."



Photo by David Smith

And when tragedy struck, that's exactly what Simek did.

LeDoux passed away in 1995, a loss that shook Simek to her core. Still, she didn't allow herself to stay in a dark place.

"When Dad passed, she was in Nashville by herself," said Jeanne. "Mother told me she was having a really tough time at the kitchen table one day and just kind of broke down. After crying for a while, she said, 'Well, Bonnie, that's it. You get yourself back together again and carry on.'"

Two years later, Simek decided it was time to move to East Tennessee to be

closer to her daughter. Before her move, Simek returned to her hometown to attend her 54th high school reunion, a trip that would bring about an unexpected reconnection.

"Twelve days after mom leaves for Charlotte, the very town she met Dad in, I get a call," said Jeanne. "She said, 'I have good news, and I have bad news. The bad news is that I won't be coming to live with you, but the good news is that I'm getting married!'"

Simek had coincidentally bumped into her high school sweetheart, Ed Simek, and the two immediately hit it off. As with her first marriage, Simek

knew right away that the timing was right.

After traveling all over the world, Simek ended up right back where her journey began. Though it was difficult for her to no longer be near her daughter, Simek's move back to Charlotte was a blessing in disguise as she relied on Ed's love and support when the family lost Chris to a rare form of liver cancer in 2005.

Though the pain of losing a child was, and still is, unbearable at times, Simek's resolve remains.

"Mom has always taught us to have a positive attitude and to keep your chin up no matter what you are going through," said Jeanne.

After 15 years of cherished memories and companionship, Ed passed away in 2007. Simek packed her bags and returned to Tennessee to live with Jeanne, completing her 66th move.

Today, Simek is a resident at Life Care Center of Blount



County in Louisville, Tennessee. As she approaches her 89th birthday, Simek faces every day with the same unshakable courage she has so lovingly passed on to her children.

When asked what she attributes her longevity to, Simek smiled and responded, "Staying happy is the main thing, and that's something that comes from within. You have to bring the happiness out. Nothing is so bad that it couldn't be worse. You learn to pick yourself up and always keep going. Always stay happy."

Simek's a world traveler, a talented gardener and a self-taught music producer. She's an encourager, a loyal friend and a shining example of what it means to live boldly. But what Simek views as her greatest accomplishment is her role as a devoted mother – teaching her children the value of family, staying positive and following your heart. 🧡

But what Simek views as her greatest accomplishment is her role as a devoted mother – teaching her children the value of family, staying positive and following your heart.

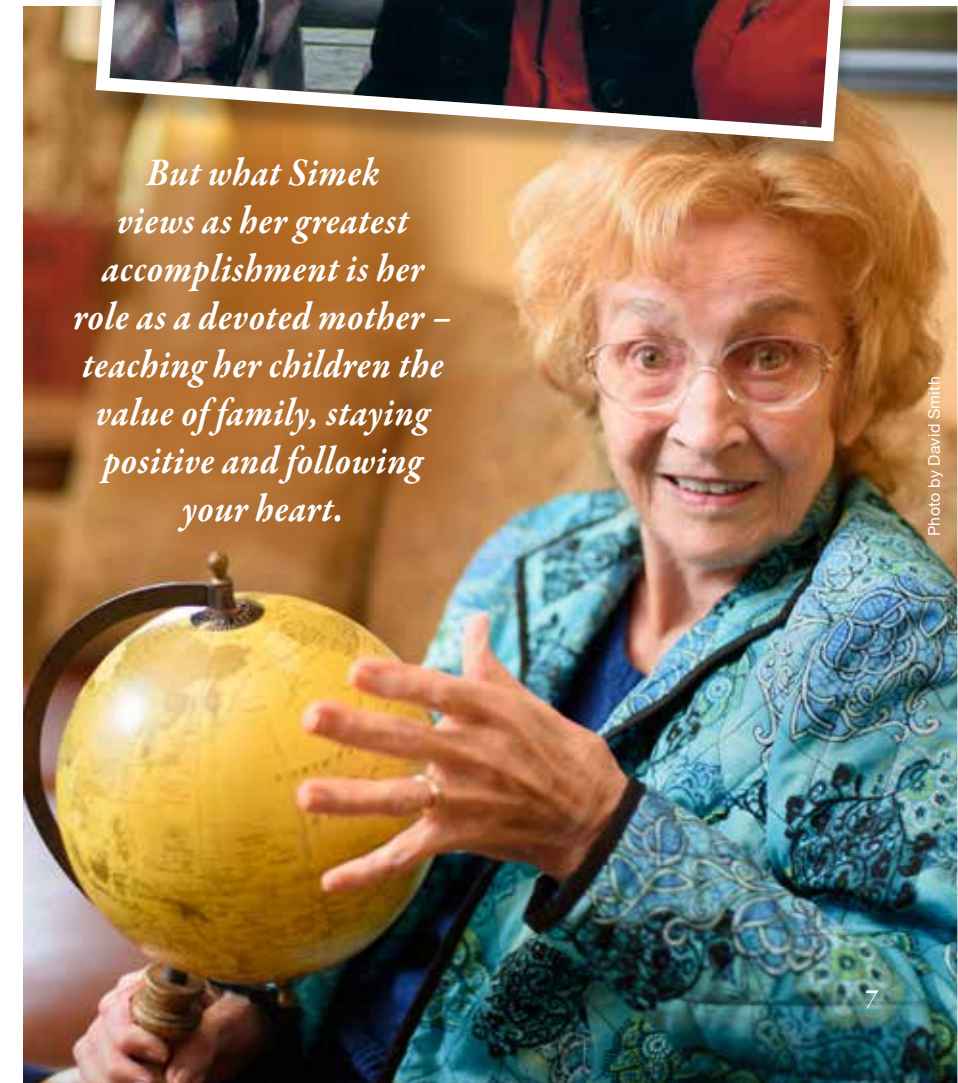
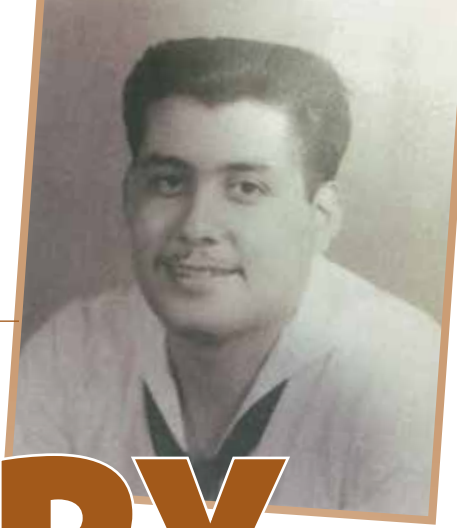


Photo by David Smith



Photo by Heather Keys

RUBEN AVILES



AND THE REST IS HISTORY

By Rosana Hughes

Ruben Aviles recalled whispering a quiet prayer as he sat by his bedroom window one summer evening.

“God, I’m tired of living this crazy life as a sailor,” he prayed. “I’d like to meet a really nice girl.”

That was when Ruth Galindo – now Aviles – came sashaying by the window.

“That one?” he asked, chuckling.

“And the rest is history,” Ruth chimed in as they reminisced about their first encounter. “He’s just been the nicest man I’ve ever known.”

Aviles was the middle child of five boys, born in East Los Angeles, California, on Jan. 23, 1934. His father was a pastor for the Assemblies of God, and his stepmother worked at a cannery. His birth mother passed away from pneumonia in 1944.

In high school, Aviles was very involved with sports, participating in track, basketball and football. As soon as he graduated in 1953, he volunteered to join the Navy where he served for four years, earning third-class rating. While in the Navy,

he worked in the office for the admiral, eventually becoming the admiral’s driver.

Aviles went on many Naval cruises to Japan. While there, he never had to face combat, but he did have some lasting experiences.

“Some of his memories are getting in big brawls with the Marines,” said Ruth. “I mean, you know, what else [was he going to do]?”

And then he met Ruth.

“I had a girlfriend who had such a crush on him, but I didn’t like him,” said Ruth. “Years later, his family happened to move a block away from where I lived, and we just kept running into each other.”

Another friend of Ruth’s was dating Aviles’ brother at the time. The group of friends went out one night while Aviles was away. Ruth forgot something in the car – which was actually Aviles’ car.

Since Aviles’ house was on the way to the bus stop, Ruth had to walk by his house any time she had to go somewhere. One night, when Aviles was home on leave from the Navy, he saw Ruth

walking home from church. He called her over and said, “You left this in my car.”

They struck up a conversation. Aviles asked when she would be going to church again and she said “Tuesday,” so they attended the following Tuesday’s service, which was for the youth. That was their first date.

“After that night, we just knew,” said Ruth. “He was so kind and considerate and we just hit it off. We dated for a couple of weeks, and then he was deployed to Japan for nine months.”

Ruth was still in high school at the time, so Aviles said she should date other boys while he was gone so she could be sure he was “the one...” and he was.

“I didn’t even go to my prom because it just wouldn’t be fun without him,” said Ruth. “I was voted Prom Queen, but I wasn’t crowned because I didn’t show up. He thinks it’s so funny. He always says, ‘You didn’t get crowned because of me!’”

Aviles was discharged from the Navy and married Ruth in 1957. He began pursuing a degree in business while working for the

“He had a few customers when Ruben took over, and from one little bobtail, we ended up with 12 tractor-trailers.”

Los Angeles Police Department in the records and identification department. Back then, there were no computers for police officers to quickly reference a person's file. They had to call the records and identification department in order to see if a person had any kind of record.

Eventually, Aviles was asked to become an undercover police officer in the drug enforcement department. He turned the offer down because he didn't want to worry Ruth since she didn't like the idea of him working in that level of danger.

“I didn't want to be a young widow,” said Ruth.

Scheduling eventually became a problem for Aviles at the LAPD. He took a job at the local library that allowed him to have a flexible schedule to accommodate the classes he had to take.

When Aviles finished his classes, he began working at Aerojet General, a rocket and missile propulsion manufacturer in Downey, California. He started in the office and was then transferred to the ordnance department, where he tested bombs and other explosives.

“They would go to Nevada testing grounds to test bombs,” said Ruth. “He used to have to climb a tower to drop the bombs

to see how they'd explode. And I didn't want him to carry a gun at LAPD! I always thought that was ironic.”

Since the United States wasn't actively at war at the time, there was low demand for explosives, and Aviles was laid off. He was temporarily called back a few times and worked on and off for Aerojet until he got the opportunity to purchase a truck route from his older brother, Robert.

“It was just a little old bobtail his brother had,” said Ruth. “He had a few customers when Ruben took over, and from one little bobtail, we ended up with 12 tractor-trailers. That was his big achievement – from one to 12 trucks.”

Along with their two sons, Randy and Robert, Aviles and his wife ran their company, 3R Trucking, for 25 years, transporting produce from the Mexican border to the Los Angeles market, where the produce was distributed to different stores.

They had to close the company when the government allowed the Mexican trucks to cross the border and travel all the way to Los Angeles, reducing costs and cutting out the need for a middleman.

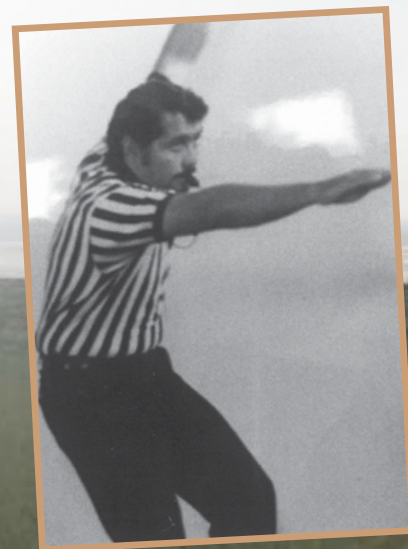
“We couldn't compete against them,” said Ruth. “They beat us out of a lot of contracts.”

Soon after Aviles closed the company, one of his sons reopened it under the new name R & K Trucking. His son was able to recover some of their former drivers and even a few of their previous clients.

After letting go of the company, Aviles became a school bus driver for the Oceanside School District in San Diego County, California, for about two years. Then, he decided to get a job driving the school bus for Tri-City Christian School in Vista, California. There, he was able to start and coach a girls' softball and basketball team.

“This is just his nature,” said Ruth. “There's nothing Ruben didn't tackle. It's just who he is. He saw they had no girls' basketball or softball teams, so he volunteered.”

As the girls' softball and basketball coach, Aviles helped build the girls' self-confidence by believing in them and



Aviles was touched by working so closely with the soldiers from their deployment to their return home.

encouraging them to get more involved in their sports.

“One day I was thinking, ‘You know, I don't get to see my husband,’” said Ruth. “‘He's always driving the kids around in the bus, and then he's practicing or at a game,’ so one night I decided I would go to a home game. One of the parents of the girls came up and sat down next to me, and she said, ‘I can't tell you how grateful we are for Ruben. We love him so much. He has made such a change in our daughter. She has such self-confidence like you wouldn't believe.’”

From driving buses for the school, Aviles went on to shuttle residents at Ocean Hills Country Club, a gated senior living community, to and from their doctors' appointments or to the grocery store. After that, he worked at Camp Pendleton, just north of San Diego, driving Marines to various destinations.

“It was interesting at the camp – they had little cities that were built to look like Iraq and Iran where the boys would train with bombs and other ammunition,” said

Ruth. “When he first started, he would come home crying, saying, ‘Honey, they're so mean to those kids. They're so young, about the age of our grandkids, and the sergeants, they're so mean.’ But he understood they had to make men out of them – out of these young boys.”

Aviles was touched by working so closely with the Marines from their deployment to their return home. He was able to see them reunite with their families and see their babies for the first time – babies that were born while they were overseas.

Soon, Aviles began training the soldiers to drive the buses. They had to take their own buses overseas, so they needed to become certified in order to drive. It was during one of these training sessions that Aviles suffered a stroke that paralyzed him on the right side of his body.

“Every doctor said, ‘He's not going to make it; he's not going to make it,’” said Ruth. “But I knew he wouldn't leave me!”

Aviles has been at Life Care Center of Vista for five and a half years now, and after all of these

years, his greatest joy still comes from being with his wife.

Next year, Aviles and Ruth will celebrate 60 years of marriage and a family that includes four children, 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Their marriage has given them countless opportunities to show their love and support for one another, and, through it all, Aviles has always found ways to make Ruth happy. Now, Ruth says it is her job to keep Aviles happy. She is his encourager, and his biggest admirer.

“He's so thoughtful, so kind, always just wanting to make sure his family has everything they need,” said Ruth. “He is perfect for me. The things that I find the most adoring about him, somebody else might see it as a weakness, but for me he is perfect.” 🙌



AN Open DOOR

By Bethany Timmons



Photo by Mark Gardin Photography



Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1928. Jean Hendrickson was born a year before the Great Depression began. Living through the despair, she developed a deeper understanding of compassion. Her family lost its wealth during those hard years, but her father never let that break his optimism.

“It was a challenging time for everybody,” Hendrickson recalled of her childhood, “but while watching my father, I learned how doors opened when the opportunities beyond them were most needed.”

Grandma Jo, her father’s mother, opened the first huge door for Hendrickson when she told her that she was a very lovable and kind human being. Compassion is a gift she feels she has received over and over from others.

One summer, Hendrickson attended a camp for teenagers. Her roommate was black, as were many of the new friends she made. Coming from a nearly all-white neighborhood, the experience opened another huge door for Hendrickson by allowing her to learn about others.

Similar moments throughout her childhood helped Hendrickson develop a greater understanding of those different from her.

During the early ’60s, Hendrickson and some friends heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak. It was prior to his “I Have a Dream” speech, but King’s words still had a tremendous presence and deep impact on Hendrickson.

“It was as if he was speaking directly to me, teaching me the principles of equality, justice and nonviolence with a passion that was contagious,” said Hendrickson.

After the speech, Hendrickson became a civil rights activist and joined the peace movement.

At age 20, Hendrickson married Austin Hendrickson, who was also an activist. They had three children: Susan, Grant and Sharon. During their children’s adolescent years, Hendrickson and Austin hosted several international students in their house for several months at a time, which broadened their children’s understanding of the world.

Her son Grant shared: “She heard her higher calling and was passionate about the decisions she made and the directions her life took her. She always followed her heart and tried to serve people with compassion and understanding. Her non-judgmental nature and empathy were very enlightening to me. She always saw the meaning of day-to-day issues and [the importance of] giving thanks for our current circumstances.”

Austin’s mother was very involved in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. The relationship opened a door for Hendrickson that was one of the most influential in her life, presenting her with many opportunities to serve others.

“WILPF was founded in 1915 and helped to gather women from around the world to work for peace in nonviolent ways, promoting political, economic

and social justice for all,” said Hendrickson. “After many trips to Washington, D.C., for WILPF conferences, my definition of civil rights was changed to include those of women.”

Over the years, Hendrickson’s faith in the doors that opened for her grew. She could sense the direction she was meant to take and what paths were meant for her.

“Her caring and giving spirit was something a lot of people judged her by,” said Grant. “They couldn’t understand her involvement in certain things, but she took their criticism well, and she knew the direction her life needed to go.”

In the early 1970s, Hendrickson began work as a counselor at the Meadowbrook Women’s Clinic, one of the first abortion clinics after the passage of Roe v. Wade in 1973.

“There was so much energy opposing a woman’s right to abortion,” said Hendrickson. “It was not an easy decision for any of the women. How precious a child is, and how difficult it is to give one up.”

Yet again, she had an understanding for those who were different than her.

After discovering a pattern of abuse with many women she counseled, Hendrickson began advocating for women who were physically abused, working at one of the first battered women’s shelters in the country.

Years later, in an article for the “Spiritual Women’s Times,” Hendrickson wrote: “If we can love everybody else on their individual paths and not judge them to be right or wrong, then I think we’re getting it. I think

“If we can love everybody else on their individual paths and not judge them to be right or wrong, then I think we’re getting it.”

that has to start with ourselves, because we usually judge ourselves the most harshly.”

Hendrickson’s passion for counseling others led to many years of traveling and teaching workshops around the country.

When people asked how she had accomplished so much in her life, Hendrickson’s response was, “I’ve always worked as part of a team, and we all did different things. But we were all focused on the benefits for society.”

Later in life, when Hendrickson was 65 years old and retired, she discovered

there were still many doors left to open in her life.

Among other opportunities, Hendrickson became a wedding officiate. After someone asked her to officiate at a wedding on a small plane flying over Mt. Constitution on Orcas Island, Hendrickson found she enjoyed it.

“Hundreds of weddings followed, on land, on sea (but no others in the air), and it was,” she said without reservation, “the most fun professional time in my life.”

Yet another new door opened for Hendrickson when she became a resident at Life Care Center of the San Juan Islands in Friday Harbor, Washington. When the leader of a memoir writing class, Janet Thomas, needed one more person, she asked Hendrickson to join. Hendrickson, as with all things she took on in life, wrote with passion. She eventually published a book called “We All Have a Purpose for Being Here: A Memoir.” Hendrickson followed that with a booklet entitled “Joy: Living in a Nursing Home.”

The compassion with which Hendrickson wrote reflected the compassion and encouragement she had received over and over from others throughout her life. Thanks to Grandma Jo and her father’s optimism, Hendrickson had the confidence to walk

through every open door she faced.

“Joy just flowed,” remembered Hendrickson about discovering her passion to write. “My [second] book was designed to bring comfort, peace and joy to seniors who need to make changes in their living arrangements, and for adult children assisting their parents to find new perspectives about what the future may hold.”



Today, Jean is 88 years old. Grandma Jo, who was 95 when she died, is her inspiration for longevity. Old age, Grandma Jo taught, is “pretty important and pretty special;” it contains as many opportunities for fulfillment as in younger years.

“Now, I feel finished, ready to go,” said Hendrickson. “I’m not desperate to go, just ready, when the time is right. I feel

comfortable with death and comfortable with life. Death is just another door opening to new adventures. ... If I’m happy, and I am, perhaps it is because I have managed to achieve some level of satisfaction – whatever my current situation.” 🌸





Photo by Rhonda Pezek Photography

The People Business

BILL HENRY

By Xavier Jasso

“I was always outside of myself,” shared James William “Bill” Henry. “Since childhood, I always found people to ‘go all in’ with. I enjoyed trying to become a part of whatever I was doing, trying new things. One year I’m studying social studies, the next studying

language, the next owning a business, the next, something different. But it was all the people business. All different, but deep down it was all the same thing.”

Born into a Marine family at the Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in Oceanside, California, in September of 1959,

Henry lived a life of constant motion. From an early age, Henry and his family traveled the country as their assignments for different military bases changed: California, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida and, finally, Scottsdale, Arizona. This constant movement would

be the beginning of Henry’s involvement in what he calls “the people business,” a life focused on interpersonal relationships and the pursuit of new experiences.

“I remember: new states and new states and new states,” Henry said. “New schools, new friends, it was always something new. It was a part of my life. And with every move, I would arrive in a new family. A new family made of people who came from other families in the military and were just like me, but different. It was beautiful.”

After the family settled in Scottsdale, Henry continued to live a life with few boundaries.

“When Billy was growing up, we were in a horse area,” explained his mother, Nena. “You could just ride right off your property, out in the mountains where it was rural. You could just ride anywhere, go anywhere.”

This sense of freedom instilled in Henry a deep love for nature, physical activity and travel. He was passionate about living life to the fullest, regardless of the endeavor, and it was reflected in everything he did. Whatever Henry found interesting, whether it be people, sports or education, he pursued it with fervor.

Unfortunately, his active lifestyle would result in several injuries throughout his life.

“Billy was always the one boy in the family who had broken something on a continual basis,” chuckled Nena. “One time, he just walked off the bus, fell and broke his arm.”

Henry’s first major injury occurred in his junior year of high school during a trip to Supai, Arizona, where he and a group of teens from his local YMCA hiked down into the canyon. On the way back up, Henry walked out on a ledge which gave way, and down he went, 52 feet, resulting in a broken foot and ankle.

But, injury never stopped Henry from excelling or pursuing his passion.

“I remember getting a call from the principal of Billy’s high school saying that he wanted to see us,” laughed Nena. “And Billy, being the passionate, red-blooded teenager that he was, made me and his father think, ‘Now what?’ The principal called us into his office and said, ‘Bill scored the highest SAT scores that have ever been scored in the history of this school!’ We weren’t surprised, but it was quite the accomplishment. Billy really excelled at any subject that he truly loved, and this

carried on to everything else in his life.”

After graduation, Henry attended the University of Arizona at Tucson. During this time, he worked in the food industry as a server at various restaurants, something he believes was closely connected to his studies.

“I was doing sort of a mixture between social and business studies and Russian literature,” explained Henry. “But that’s because everything is a mix. I was a restaurant man, and [my studies] gave me the opportunity to meet fantastic people and string together all different types of businesses. I kind of combo-ed and slid around constantly, but it was all connected. Social studies, the people business. That’s the kind of thing I did.”

During the summer following his third year at University of Arizona, Henry moved to Grand Lake, Colorado, in an effort to find a better-paying job that would help him afford his school expenses. Henry’s love of new adventures got the best of him, however, and when a promising opportunity arose, he and a good friend opened their first restaurant, The Red Fox. The restaurant ran successfully



"I sort of feel, and sometimes fear, that I have turned into a different person," explained Henry. "But, I love it all. I just feel like who I feel ... I'm happy with myself, talking and just being me... and being everything I am."

until the owners of the property sold the building out from underneath Henry and his partner to make a quick profit.

Discouraged but determined, the duo opened The Bayou in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The restaurant fared even better than The Red Fox and was praised in multiple culinary reviews in the area. But Henry never really saw his businesses as restaurants.

"It was the people business," explained Henry. "We were all different types, and we enjoyed that. It's always been about enjoying each other."

In addition to the enjoyment Henry experienced from forming relationships at work, Henry also loved horseback riding and cross-country skiing, as well as dancing, a skill which won him many awards.

After living in Colorado for a few years, Henry moved back to Arizona and attended Arizona State University, intent on finishing his degree. It was during this time that an opportunity to move to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands presented itself. St. Thomas proved to be more than a getaway paradise.

During his stay there, Henry and a group of friends drove up into the mountains. Henry decided to ride back down the mountain with two friends after spending the day enjoying the view of Magens Bay.

On the way down, the driver missed a curve at the famous peak Drake's Seat. Henry and his friends plummeted off the mountainside. Upon first impact, Henry's entire seat was ripped from the Jeep Wrangler, and he was tossed from the vehicle. Onlookers watched as Henry, badly injured, climbed back to safety and refused to go to a hospital until his friends, who had crashed further down the mountain, were recovered safely.

Even after the accident, Henry refused to slow down. He lived in St. Thomas for a total of six years, working as a bar manager at a major resort and starting a sunset cruise business.

Over time, Henry's history of accidents began to catch up with him. Complications with his hip became severe, forcing him to leave St. Thomas to seek out a highly recommended hip specialist in Millford, Connecticut, to get it replaced. It was in Connecticut that Henry took a fall down a cement stairwell and cracked his skull.

Yet that still did not stop Henry.

After recovery, Henry continued to live in Connecticut, and returned to work in restaurants until the attack on the World Trade Center in September of 2001. Henry and a friend, reminded of how short life can be, decided to sell everything they had and leave

the Northeast to trek along the Eastern seaboard until they reached the Florida Keys. From there they turned their sights toward Houston, Texas, and then eventually to Arizona, a six-month road trip.

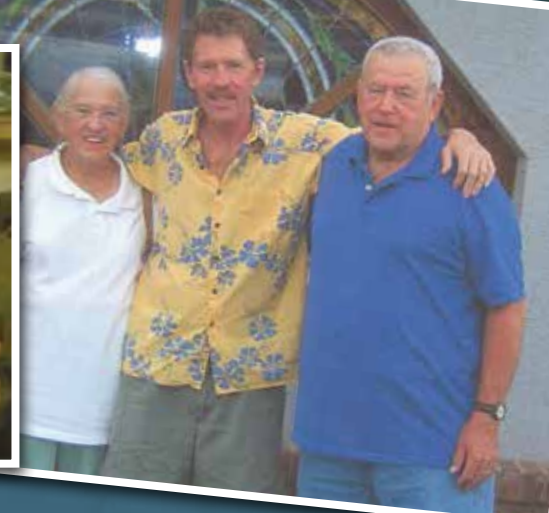
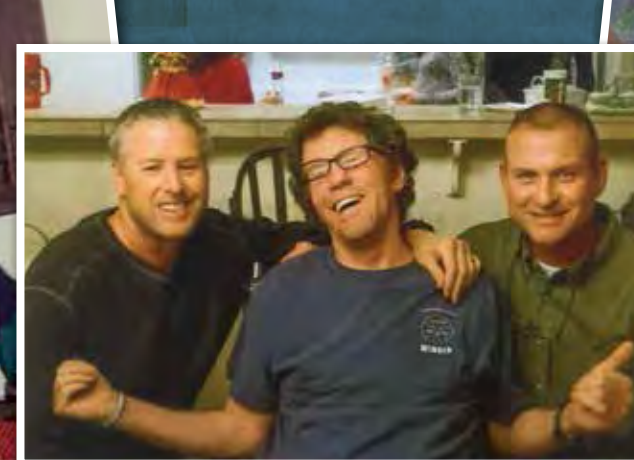
"They were in no hurry," laughed Nena. "They had one of the best times of their lives, stopping and going wherever they pleased. Those of us in Arizona, like his family, were just hoping that when he finally got back he'd settle down here, but he went back to Colorado instead."

After Henry returned to Montrose, Colorado – and 17 years after his skull injury in Connecticut – life revealed the next trick up its sleeve, one still shrouded in mystery.

Henry went for a walk one day, and sometime after, a passerby found him lying on the sidewalk. When they got him to a hospital, doctors found that Henry had fractured his skull from the nape of his neck to his forehead.

Realizing the severity of the situation, the hospital flew Henry to the neurological center in Grand Junction, Colorado. Henry was put into surgery right away after they discovered severe internal bleeding in his brain.

"When he woke up, he knew his brothers, he knew me, his dad – it was wonderful," said Nena softly. "But after a day in ICU, Bill had his first seizure."



The hospital, thinking a resurgence in internal bleeding had occurred, performed surgery on Henry again, only to come out empty-handed: there was no more bleeding. They could not explain the seizure. Henry's condition stabilized after an extended stay, and he was transferred to a hospital closer to home in Montrose.

Henry underwent physical, occupational and speech therapies in an effort to reclaim independence after the seizure. He was released in March of 2013 only to suffer from a grand-mal seizure on Easter Sunday, one month later.

Henry was sent to a brain trauma rehab clinic in Grand Junction, where he experienced a remarkable recovery. The trauma clinic let him fly home to Scottsdale to spend Christmas of 2013 with his family, where he shared the good news that he was due to be released from the clinic in early 2014.

But things did not go as hoped.

At the end of January 2014, Henry suffered another grand-mal seizure which the clinic could not stop for nine days. Henry stayed for further

treatment until October of 2014, when he suffered another nine-day, uncontrollable grand-mal seizure.

Henry was hooked up to a breathing machine, and he lost his ability to swallow. By the time he had regained the strength and clarity to breathe for himself, Henry had developed hospital-acquired pneumonia.

Henry, an impressive physical presence at 6 feet 3 inches tall, came to Life Care Center of Paradise Valley in Phoenix, Arizona, in early 2015 at a shocking 127 pounds. A lover of all things active, Henry had also lost his ability to walk.

Today, Henry, never discouraged, still has his fire for living life to its fullest and connecting with the people around him.

"Bill has the biggest heart and wears it out on his sleeve," laughed Lorna Mattox, activity director at Life Care Center of Paradise Valley. "He shares it with everyone he meets. When many people would have given up, Bill is out there, encouraging others and spreading positivity wherever he goes."

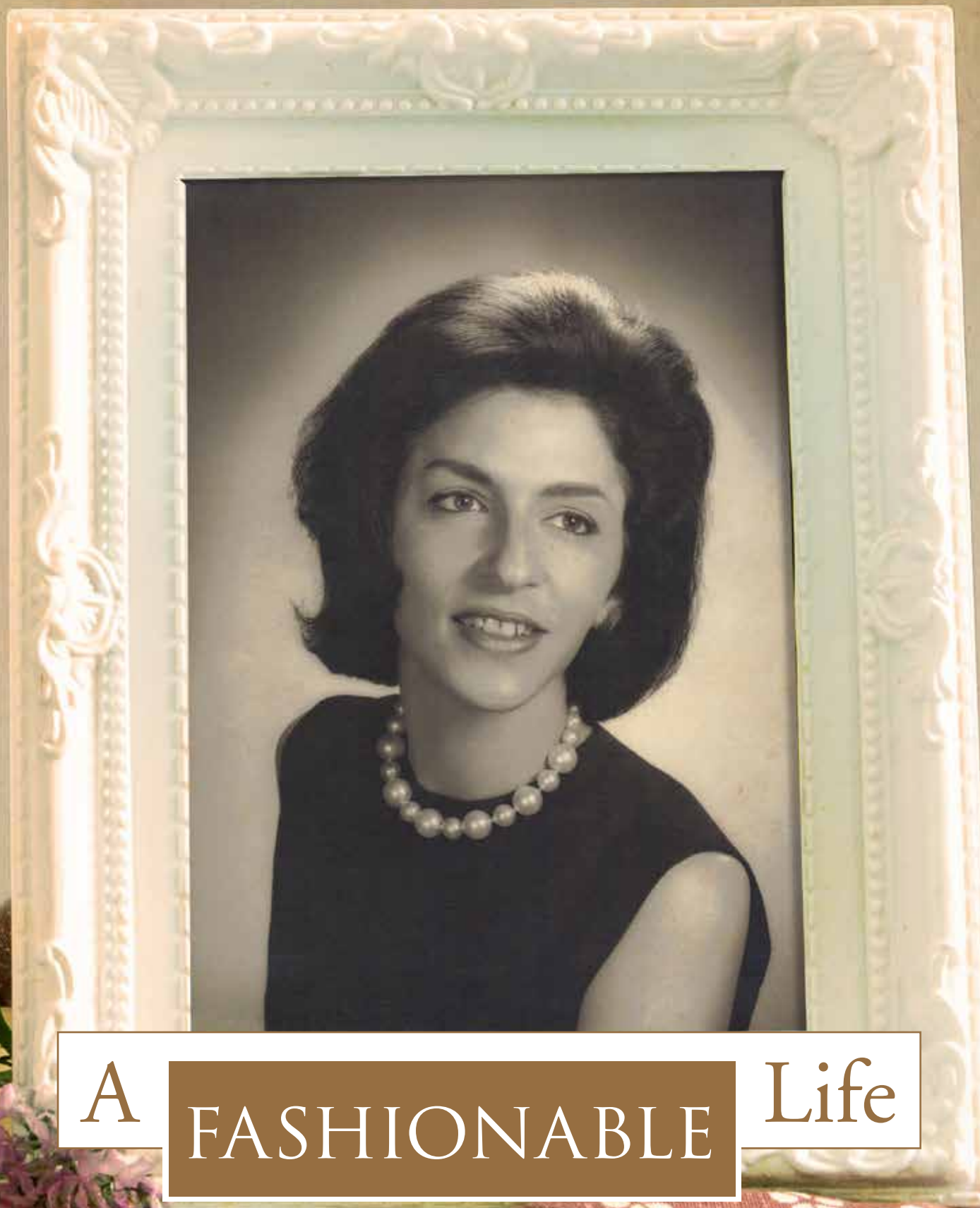
Though Henry cannot walk, he releases his energy through alternative forms of activity.

"Residents, and even associates on their days off, come to watch Bill participate in our drum circle activity," said Mattox. "Residents are encouraged to express themselves through drums, and Bill just lights up the room. Music in general is a passion for Bill. It's amazing! Music, you can see, touches his soul, and through that he touches ours."

Henry explains that his energy and love for life are just two pieces of the elaborate puzzle of life he still calls the people business.

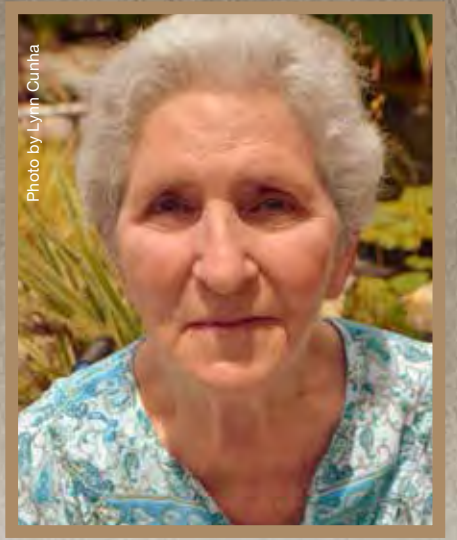
And for Henry, that's what life is all about: connection and experience. Regardless of the obstacles he's faced in life, he tries to maintain a positive outlook and connect with the people around him. His love for life persists, even in the presence of fear.

"I sort of feel, and sometimes fear, that I have turned into a different person," explained Henry. "But, I love it all. I just feel like who I feel ... I'm happy with myself, talking and just being me... and being everything I am." 🙏



BONNIE MICHAELS

“Picture yourself walking into a big, long room with a long table with eight men sitting around it, all waiting to hear what you’ve got to say. Some of them saw some of the fashions in Europe, and they would never permit their fashion director to be dressed in such a flippant manner. I had to [cross the line] that said, ‘No women allowed.’” – Bonnie Michaels



A FASHIONABLE Life

By Leigh Alberton

It is a picture that would intimidate most, especially as a female in a predominantly male world. It’s a good thing that intimidation never stopped Bonnie Michaels. She walked into that room, owned her role as corporate fashion director and crossed the line that said no women were allowed.

Life started in a much quieter setting for Michaels: Painted Post, New York, a small town that her sons describe as a “Norman Rockwell-type town.” Born in 1928, she had two brothers, Bob and Bud, and parents who instilled a strong work ethic from a young age by setting the example.

Her mom worked for Corning Glassworks, now Corning, Inc. She excelled at work and was promoted to the head of her department. Her father worked for Ingersoll Rand as the shipping supervisor. One aspect of her father’s job came in handy during wartime. Mothers from the community would sneak her father packages for their sons who were soldiers serving in the military overseas. He would ship

them, and it was one of his small ways of contributing to war efforts.

Childhood was enjoyable for Michaels, and she remembers doing almost everything as a threesome with her two brothers. After graduating from the small country school in Painted Post, she began looking for her next adventure.

“When I graduated, I had several friends in the class, and they all went to Corning Glassworks to work as secretaries,” Michaels explained. “I was not fascinated by the secretarial life, so I went to hairdressing school in Rochester, New York. That’s where I met my husband.”

Michaels and her husband, Chris, were married June 12, 1948.

After Michaels and Chris completed hairdressing school, they moved to Painted Post to open their own salon. Her grandmother offered space rent-free.

“It was a marvelous thing in the little town of Painted Post to have your own beauty salon,” elaborated Michaels. “She allowed

me to have my whole beauty shop there. I had a shampoo room and separate waiting room. We had our ads on Friday night for Saturday business. We were pretty big time for a small town.”

In the 1940s, a male hairdresser was rare, and Chris always had clientele who requested him specifically.

Around this time, Chris and Michaels learned that a mutual female friend from hairdressing school was modeling. Chris decided that if this lady could succeed at modeling, so could his wife.

In an act of bravery and excitement, Michaels left Painted Post alone to attend modeling school in New York City.

“My husband felt there was nothing I couldn’t do, so he put me on a plane all by myself to a place I had never been before,” shared Michaels.

Little did Michaels know, but Chris had just set her on the path toward becoming a fashion director – and paving the way for women in the fashion industry and breaking the monumental glass ceiling. It took a lot of work



to get there, and modeling school was the first step.

Michaels was scared in the city all by herself, but she was never one to let fear stop her and embraced the challenge, soaking up everything modeling school could teach her.

After modeling school, Michaels and Chris settled back in Rochester. Michaels got a job with E.W. Edwards and Sons in the fashion department.

In the interview, she was told she was too “New York” for Rochester, but she got the job anyway. Her first responsibility was dressing mannequins, but she quickly moved her way up to fashion coordinator, serving as the expert on what the ladies of Rochester would want to purchase.

“What we did was schedule tours during market week,” explained Michaels. “That’s the week when a lot of the designers come together to present their wares on the runway. It’s all very dramatic.”

After viewing the newest fashions, Michaels would summarize her observations and opinions, but most importantly her recommendations as to what would be sellable in Rochester. Her expertise, lessons from

modeling school and living in New York City greatly influenced her ability to understand the specific needs of the E.W. Edwards and Sons’ market.

Another opportunity that presented itself while at E.W. Edwards was the chance to teach modeling classes like the ones Michaels had attended in New York City.

“The students in modeling school were sent there because their parents wanted them to look like models,” said Michaels. “I became a leading figure for learning the niceties of being a young lady.”

Modeling school was much more than simply learning to walk the runway or pose for photos. Michaels taught the young ladies of Rochester important etiquette lessons such as how to enter a room, how to handle oneself at a table and how to sit in a car properly.

During these years at E.W. Edwards and Sons, Michaels and Chris also expanded their family with two sons. David was born in 1955, and Christopher was born in 1958. When not working, Michaels also enjoyed yearly visits to St. Petersburg, Florida, where her parents retired.

On one of those visits, a new job presented itself. Maas Brothers, a large department store chain in Florida owned by Allied Stores was hiring a fashion associate. Michaels interviewed and was hired on the spot.

Michaels, Chris and their two sons moved to Florida in 1971, when David was 15 and Christopher was 12. Starting as fashion coordinator, Michaels was eventually promoted to vice

president and corporate fashion director, a position that Maas Brothers had never had before.

had translated to New York City. From there, she figured out what would be best for the Florida stores. When not traveling, Michaels was hosting guests for Maas

While her career was extremely successful, family was always Michaels’ first priority.

As corporate fashion director, Michaels had the opportunity to guide the Maas Brothers brand and serve the greater Florida area. Learning what would sell in Florida actually started with research in Europe. She visited Europe twice a year to attend the designer runway shows. This was another first for Maas Brothers. Until Michaels, they had never sent a representative to Europe to see the shows.

It wasn’t an easy task to obtain tickets to Europe’s shows, but Michaels persevered and eventually had a set itinerary for her twice yearly trips: Milan, Florence, Paris and London. Her favorite European city was Milan. In addition to attending the biannual European runway shows, Michaels traveled to New York City monthly to stay up-to-date on fashion trends. Her week-long visits to New York City centered upon the fashions being sold on 7th Avenue. She was always studying to see how the European fashions

Brothers such as famous designers and Miss USA.

While her career was extremely successful, family was always Michaels’ first priority. She often found ways to involve her sons: “One of my favorite stories from Mom hosting famous people was the fact that Miss Greece taught me to eat French fries with vinegar,” shared David. “We were around a lot of pretty women, but were really too young to know the impact of it.”

“Being proud of my mother for the person she is will last in my mind forever,” added Christopher. “She always provided for her family, making sure [we] did not stray from values she instilled in us.”

Michaels’ career at Maas Brothers spanned almost 20 years and left a large mark of success on the fashion industry. She was the first female board member of Allied Stores as well as the first female vice president.

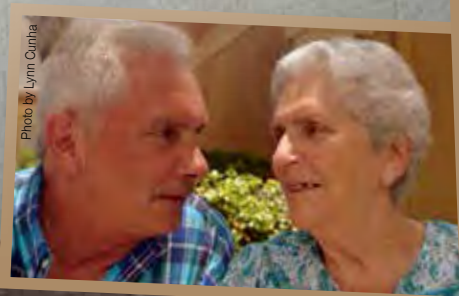
Michaels retired from Maas Brothers shortly before they were bought out and settled down to enjoy retirement. She taught a few fashion classes for Syracuse University and got involved with charity work for cancer research. Never one to stray too far from fashion, she organized several fashion shows for breast cancer survivors, as well.

“Mom waited until she retired and the kids were out of the nest to enjoy some of life’s pleasures she so dearly deserved, from her Lincolns to her Z28 Camaros and... her wide-open waterfront condo on Boca Ciega Bay that she so enjoyed,” shared Christopher.

Now a resident at Life Care Center of Ocala, Florida, Michaels enjoys keeping up with her sons and reminiscing about the incredible life they have all lived together.

When asked about her proudest moment, Michaels quickly responded: “It has to be breaking the glass ceiling because that would be the hardest thing of all.”

Editor’s note: Bonnie Michaels passed away in July 2016, as this publication was being finalized for print. This article is printed in her memory, with the permission of her family.



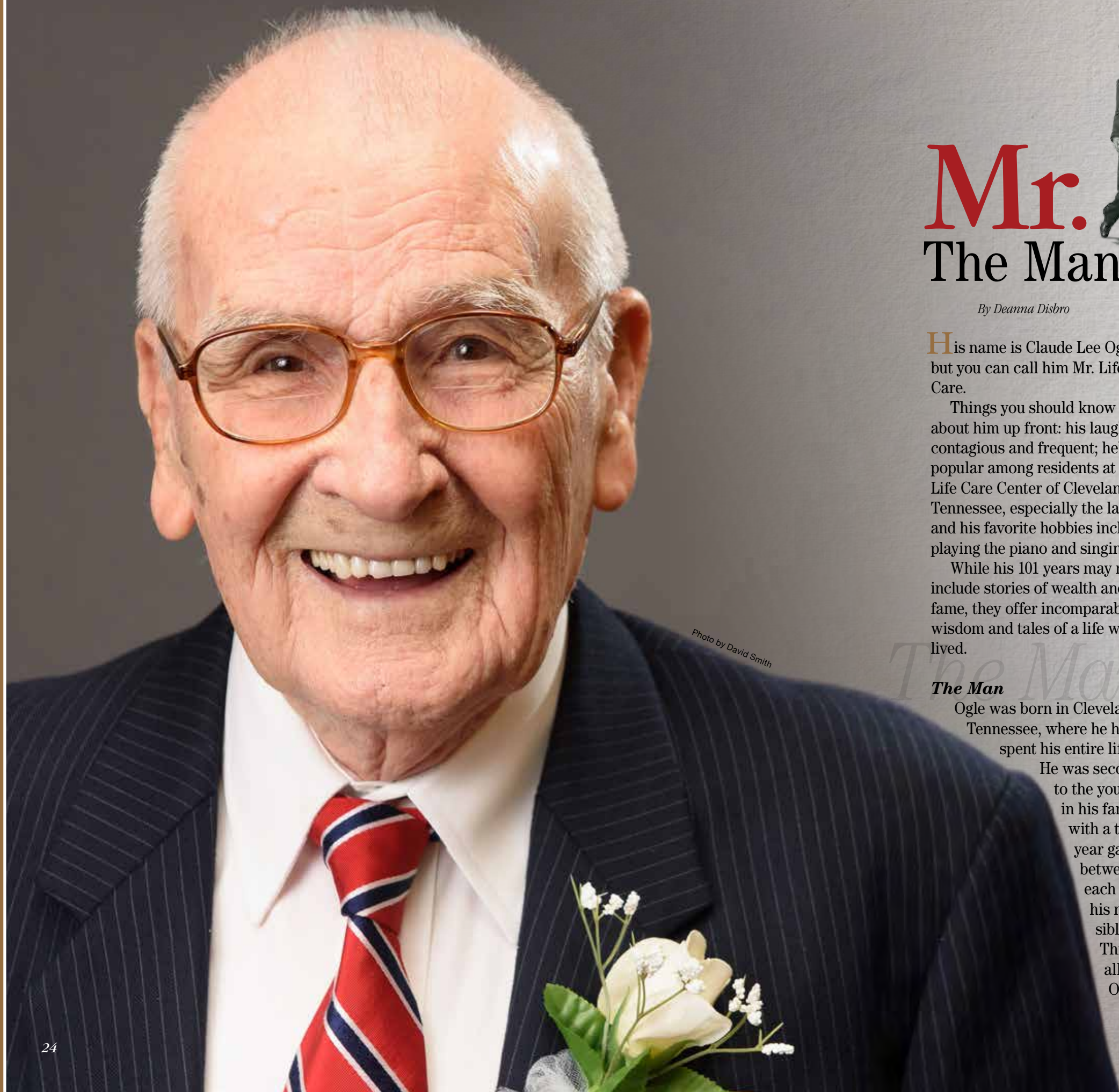


Photo by David Smith



• CLAUDE OGLE •

Mr. Life Care: The Man, the Myth, the Legend

By Deanna Disbro

His name is Claude Lee Ogle, but you can call him Mr. Life Care.

Things you should know about him up front: his laugh is contagious and frequent; he's popular among residents at Life Care Center of Cleveland, Tennessee, especially the ladies; and his favorite hobbies include playing the piano and singing.

While his 101 years may not include stories of wealth and fame, they offer incomparable wisdom and tales of a life well lived.

The Man

Ogle was born in Cleveland, Tennessee, where he has spent his entire life.

He was second to the youngest in his family, with a two-year gap between each of his nine siblings. This allowed Ogle to

grow up with his older siblings' children, some of whom he would go on to work with.

After graduating from the sixth grade, Ogle began working. His first job was at the Dixie Foundry in Cleveland – we'll come back to that. After the foundry, he worked as an upholsterer for manufacturers in Cleveland and Chattanooga, Tennessee. He ended his career at the Church of God Publishing House after working as a hymnal folder for 33 years.

It wasn't all work for Ogle, however.

"Myself, I was a professional hobo," said Ogle referring to his days of catching trains. His nephew Walter had never ridden a train, so Ogle decided to help him catch one on their way to work in Chattanooga. Once they hopped on, they asked the other hobos where it was headed, and they were told it was a train to Atlanta, Georgia – far from their intended destination. Panicking, he and Walter jumped off the train.

"Oh, we bailed off there and tore that railroad up, sliding in them cinders and rocks," Ogle said.

As they finally came to a halt, bruised and shaken up, they saw the train slowly coming to a stop up ahead and realized they were actually in Ooltewah, a stop on the way to Chattanooga.

"If we'd have just been patient and waited, we could have gotten off there without any trouble," said Ogle.

A ladies' man through and through, Ogle met his match in Eva Viola Mullinax.

Ogle chose Eva after his pastor's wife sat him down and made him decide between three young ladies at his church, one being her daughter, who had their hearts set on Ogle. According to Ogle, he'd never even considered her daughter to be in the running and quickly counted her out.

He and Eva were married in 1942 while riding in the back of a 1937 Plymouth with a preacher performing the wedding and his brother-in-law driving them to Georgia. They went on to have two sons, Claude Jr. and Kenneth. Ogle now has one grandson who he hopes to marry off soon. Ogle and Eva were married 62 years when she passed away in 2003.



Photo by David Smith

The Myth

Ogle's life is full of adventures, some of which got him into a bit of trouble.

Back to the foundry – Ogle learned one day that some of his co-workers had gone on strike for higher wages.

"I was making \$9.40 a week, and I don't see why anybody making that much money would go on strike," said Ogle with a chuckle.

The work force was thrown in jail for violating an injunction stating they couldn't be within a certain distance of the foundry while on strike. When Ogle learned about it, he walked three miles into town and asked to be thrown in jail with them. It took some convincing of the guards, but they finally agreed to let him in

after his co-workers vouched that he, too, was an employee of the foundry.

"I was in there 12 days and nights, and that was about the time of my life right there," said Ogle. The group spent their days in jail pillow fighting, wrestling, singing and accepting care baskets from concerned community members. People would line up outside the jail to listen to the group singing and playing guitar. Their "announcer" would yell to the crowd gathered outside, "We're coming to you live from W-J-A-I-L!"

While worried family members tried to convince the guards to let the men free, Ogle exclaimed, "I'm not wanting out of here – I broke in!"

His brushes with the law didn't stop there.

While Ogle is an easygoing man these days, he will assure you that hasn't always been the case. Before he married Eva, he spent time with a young lady whose father was "mean as the devil," according to Ogle. One day, after her dad had given Ogle a particular amount of trouble, Ogle asked the young lady, "Do you care if I give your daddy a whippin'?" She told him she didn't care a bit. Sure enough, Ogle was true to his word and laid him flat with one punch.

Her father went around trying to convince the police to throw Ogle in jail. An officer told Ogle he would have liked to have a ringside seat to that fight, and Ogle was never arrested.



Photo by David Smith



Photo by David Smith



Photo by David Smith

The Legend

The Legend

Ogle was named Mr. Life Care in 2015 at Life Care Center of Cleveland. This role has given him the opportunity to share his wit and charm with community members and the corporate offices of Life Care. He still plays the piano and sings for his fellow residents, and has performed his original song "Christmas Long Ago" for several community functions, some of his proudest memories.

For his 99th birthday, Ogle wanted to fly, so Claude Jr. took him up in a helicopter. For his 100th birthday, Ogle asked to jump out of an airplane. While that request was denied, Ogle did get the opportunity to run the bases at a Chattanooga Lookouts baseball game.

"He had a ballpark full of young kids watching him," said Deborah Norton, activity director at Life Care Center of Cleveland, "and he proudly waved to the crowd when he

made it halfway. They went wild, like he'd won the World Series."

Ogle has been a Christian most of his life. His brother Clyde brought the entire Ogle family into the Church of God. Ogle is quite proud of Clyde, who was senior pastor of the largest Church of God

"For his 100th birthday, Ogle asked to jump out of an airplane."

congregation in South Carolina until he passed away at the age of 96. Because of his influence, Ogle became heavily involved in the South Cleveland Church of God, serving as Sunday school superintendent for many years as well as serving several terms on the Church Council.

When asked what he attributes his longevity to, Ogle

pointed skyward, giving God the credit for his 101 years.

"The good Lord kept me around here for something," Ogle said.

Ogle carries his thankful spirit throughout each day, sharing his infectious positivity with residents and staff at his facility.

"Each morning, Claude gets up with a purpose," said Norton. "He travels the halls singing 'Good morning to you, good morning to you,' and goes throughout the entire building singing to each patient he passes, staff member and visitor."

Looking back over his 101 years, Ogle said he wouldn't change anything big, except maybe adding 12 additional days to his jail term.

With a smile and teary eyes, Ogle confidently concluded, "I've just had a good life." 🙏



Photo by Jim Mcelford Photography

ROUND & ROUND: HUB CAP ANNIE'S WILD RIDE

By Ryan Faricelli

“In elementary school I started stealing money,” recalled Jane Withers. “I would steal the pennies we were learning math with. Then I started stealing quarters out of the collection plate at church. There was something wrong with me right from the get-go.”

Withers was born Dec. 6, 1940. Her mother was Canadian, and her father was from Boston. Due to her 2 ½-year-old younger brother Bobby’s leukemia, Withers’ family settled in Florida, near her father’s parents.

Following lunch one afternoon, a 7-year-old Withers looked on as her grandfather was found in a pool of blood after having a stroke and falling in the restroom. In the middle of the traumatic commotion, the pediatrician from the hospital where Bobby was being cared for called to tell her mother the child’s health was failing fast. Both Bobby and Withers’ grandfather passed away that afternoon.

“My brother died, and I wasn’t even allowed to go to his funeral,” said Withers. “I was never allowed to have any closure about it. It was pretty sad, and I think that sadness just stayed with me.”

In response to the loss of Bobby, Withers was sent to spend the summer with her mother’s parents in Toronto. While there, a family member molested her, a horrific event that initiated a pattern of dissociative behaviors in Withers that included starting fires, lying and missing memories. She told no one.



Withers entered the University of Florida when she was 17, though she wasn’t pursuing an education.

“I was pursuing men!” Withers declared. “In Florida, the men were all blond and had huge muscles and were on the football team. It was a wonderful pool of possibilities.”

This need to fill out a “social résumé” was fueled by Withers’ troubled youth and accidentally exacerbated by her mother’s attempt to help.

“I became addicted to diet pills,” shared Withers. “My mother gave me two of them not really knowing what they were. I was nervous about going up to the university, and I was shy and withdrawn. She just knew the doctor prescribed them for my dad, and he always felt better after he took one. I took one, and it was the happiest day of my life. I made like 20,000 friends that first day running around, having fun. From then on, it was a love affair.”

Withers attended fraternity parties and discovered alcohol, another addiction she would carry with her much of her adulthood. She also began shoplifting with a friend, though that came to an end after a night in jail.

During Withers’ final year at college, she met Ben, a Dutch Navy officer. After just a few months of courting, Withers dropped out of school, married and was whisked away to live with Ben in Holland. She didn’t speak the language, and even worse, Ben turned out to be physically abusive.

“If you’re so miserable you want to kill yourself but you don’t have the nerve, you’ll invite someone into your life who will do it for you,” shared Withers.

Withers was too frightened and embarrassed to end the marriage, even though she knew she needed out. She became depressed and felt trapped in a foreign land with no phone, no friends and no exit. For the first time, she began to drink alone.

Eventually, Ben got a job with a Dutch shipping company in New Orleans, where the troubled couple finally divorced. Back in the United States and free of the marriage, Withers decided to finish school by becoming a voluntary ward of the state of Louisiana. She gave up her car, apartment and friends to live in a strict dorm and attend the Catholic Citadel Charity Hospital School of Nursing.



Encouraged by her family, Withers began seeing a prominent psychiatrist about her drug addictions. The doctor took advantage of her weakened mind, however, and Withers found herself in the unbelievable position of being molested again.

Withers returned to drugs, became suicidal and moved back to Florida after just one year at Charity.

"It's something all alcoholics and drug addicts do," Withers explained. "They say, 'Well maybe it will be better if I move.' They call it the geographic cure."

Withers spent the next two years completing her nursing degree at the University of Florida. She continued abusing drugs and alcohol, spending her free time with a group of friends who were also addicts.

Eventually, a new psychiatrist helped her temporarily beat her drug addiction, and Withers took her new nursing degree to Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, where she worked for a year in an emergency room. She then moved to Grady Hospital, also in Atlanta, to work as a nursing instructor for the next five years. Withers reconnected once more with her alcohol and drug addictions, developing a veneer of moral anesthesia.

Feeling that her life had become stagnant and unhealthy, Withers changed careers. Moving to Fort Smith, Arkansas, she became a top-selling representative for Wyeth Pharmaceuticals and experienced what she considers to be the best three years of her life. She made healthy friendships and joined

a 12-step program that helped her leave her amphetamine and alcohol addictions behind her for good.

Withers' new group of friends were wealthy and well-put together. She spent many dinner parties and lunch dates around distinguished socialites at various mansions and estates.

The past caught up with Withers in 1982, however, when Wyeth developed a new line of diet pills and informed her she would be adding them to the roster of products she presented to local doctors and clinics. It was a temptation she knew she had to avoid.

"They were going to put crates of samples in my garage that would arrive once a month," Withers said, remembering that fateful day. "Back when I was a real drug addict, that would have been nirvana."

Knowing her time with Wyeth had to end, Withers accompanied a co-worker to Memphis to meet Nancy Utley, who founded a chain of used hubcap stores called Hub Cap Annie.

Ready to try something new, Withers borrowed around \$10,000 from her affluent friends to purchase a pickup truck and a Hub Cap Annie franchise license for the city of Denver.

"So many times in the past I always got in trouble because of what I put in my mouth:

booze, cigarettes and drugs," joked Withers. "Hubcaps would be good because I couldn't get one in my mouth."

After a difficult first few months, the Denver Hub Cap Annie slowly found success. Withers, however, began to live two lives. One was a life of community involvement as a member of the Civitans and the Women's Political Roundtable. She worked diligently to ensure her business was in magazines and the local news. She even entered a float covered in hubcaps in holiday parades, where she would dress up as Hub Cap Annie – a Valkyrie costume complete with horned helmet, long blond braids and a brassiere.

Her other life grew less savory. Withers dropped out of her 12-step program and married a criminal named Rick who had no car, a fake driver's license and a large IRS debt. With Rick and his cartel's help, she began skimming profits and cheating the IRS. She and Rick opened a few other stores in different cities, but they all failed. She stopped getting her hubcaps from scrapyards and began placing "orders" with local street criminals and drug addicts who would find the hubcaps she needed on cars in the Denver Broncos' stadium parking lots on game days.

"I quit smoking, drinking and doing drugs, but I didn't do the work that was





required to fix the inside of me,” Withers explained. “I traded one addiction for another.”

In July 1984, the Denver Police caught up with Withers as a sting operation closed in on her business. Caught purchasing stolen hubcaps from an undercover detective, the authorities invaded her store with their weapons drawn.

The police and members of the local business community were particularly hard on Withers. She had built a well-respected facade in the community as a businesswoman, and now it appeared Withers was just a crook.

“I was the little darling of Denver and a thief,” admitted Withers. “I was a real Jekyll and Hyde. Everyone in town

had known I was arrested. I was still in a lot of clubs and some of them I had to withdraw from.”

After making bail, Withers rode home with one of her younger employees, Tommy, who was also a recovering addict.

“I’m sitting in the front of this red, shiny truck, and I’m thinking, ‘How come I’m in jail when my 12-step program has me being honest in all my affairs?’” said Withers. “Then I thought about Tommy.”

Withers realized she had made Tommy an unwilling participant in her criminal affairs. That ride home became a turning point in her life, and she never stole again.

With the help of a restraining order, Withers managed to extricate herself

from her marriage with Rick and focused on rebuilding the Hub Cap Annie business. A plea bargain ended her legal troubles, and she began the difficult work of restoring her image. When Utley, the Memphis-based founder of the franchise, went out of business, Withers was savvy enough to snatch up the expired trademark on Hub Cap Annie in 22 states. She rejoined a 12-step program again and even became the founding president of the Denver Women’s Chamber of Commerce.

Withers began using her experiences to inspire others, becoming a motivational speaker and making it a point to hire employees who needed mentoring and a second chance.

“Some people forgave me, and some never did,” Withers said of her reentrance into the upright business world. “But I was helping people who had screwed up maybe as much as I did.”

Hub Cap Annie became the largest hubcap store in

America, with an inventory of 20,000 hubcaps. Withers and her store were featured on major network and cable news outlets such as CNN, BBC and NPR. She was featured on “60 Minutes” and in “Car and Driver Magazine” and “The New York Times.” Withers even wrote and published her autobiography.

Withers’ civic endeavors blossomed as well. Denver Mayor Michael Peña requested her as part of his Mexican Advisory Council, and she served on Gov. Roy Romer’s Economic Development Council. She served in the Denver Downtown Rotary Club and held many other prestigious roles before retiring and selling Hub Cap Annie in 2008.

“I worked very hard at trying to get my mental health back, though I’m not sure I ever had it,” joked Withers from her current home at Life Care Center of Littleton, Colorado. “Somewhere along the line, with God’s help, I made up my mind that I was going to stay alive, and that I would try to be of service to people.”

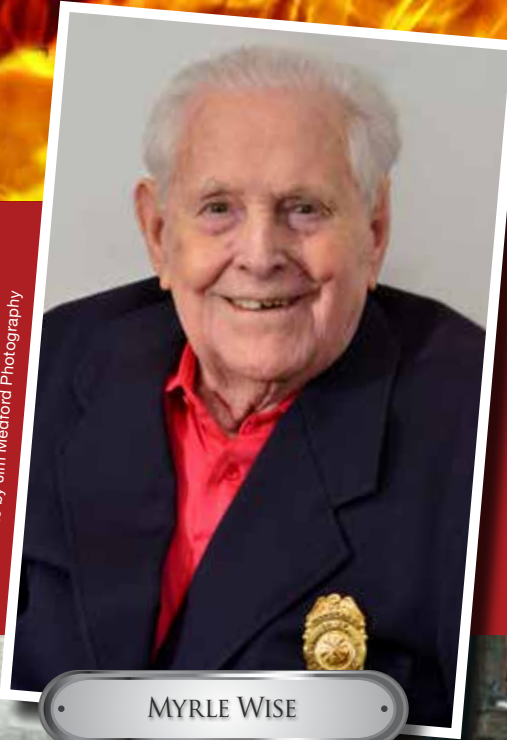
Mission accomplished. 🙏



Photo by Jim Medford Photography



Photo by Jim Medford Photography



MYRLE WISE

A TRUE CHIEF

By Heidi Tompkins



Eighteen-year-old Myrle Wise and his father, John, surveyed the city of Denver, weary from their journey from Turpin, Oklahoma.

The duo were on a mission to find a new home for their family, which included Wise's mother and six siblings. It was the Dust Bowl, and the dirt had wreaked havoc on the Wise farm in Oklahoma.

"There were seven of us all fighting for food," Wise, who was the oldest boy in the family, remembered. "The Dust Bowl took it all away."

Arriving in Denver in their 1935 Ford, it seemed that the men had found what they were looking for.

"Denver was so green they thought they were in heaven," shared Ray Coffey, Wise's stepson.

Wise returned to the farm and packed up the family while his father stayed in Denver to prepare for their arrival. Everyone moved out to Colorado except for one sister, who stayed behind to keep an eye on the farm. Family members piled into the car and headed out. Wise remembers one of his brothers putting his feet on the windshield and knocking the glass out.

Wise's father got a job at Baur's Candy, and Wise went to work there too. He soon had his first chief position: chief ice cream maker!

Not long after the family's move, Wise met a special young lady, Evelyn Holland, through some friends. The two fell in love and got married in 1938, right after Evelyn graduated

He applied himself to learning as much as he could about the career. Because he had never had the chance to go to college during the Great Depression, he took advantage of the training provided at Opportunity School in Denver. Opportunity School offered free classes in many occupations for individuals who otherwise couldn't afford higher education.

With his sharp mind, Wise learned quickly and thoroughly. He sat for his exam and not only passed but placed in the top six scores, which earned him a place in the Denver Fire Department. He reported to the station for the first time on May 7, 1943.

As a new fireman, Wise put in 24-hour shifts every other day. The department stayed



from high school. They went on to have a son, Alan, and adopt a daughter, Diane.

In 1940, Wise left Baur's and became a salesman on a bakery truck. In 1941, he changed jobs again and made fan belts for the Gates Rubber Company during World War II.

Wise knew he was capable of more, however, and he set his sights on becoming a fireman.

busy, and he loved putting out fires and helping others in tangible, often life-saving ways.

Wise quickly became respected for his efficiency at fighting fires, as well as his charisma. During this time, he took a year (April 1945 - April 1946) to serve in the United States Navy as a seaman first class, training officers in Great Lakes, Illinois, and Memphis,



He continued to put out fires fast, and he was well known as a man who could fix the equipment with ease.

Tennessee, how to fight fires on their ships.

In 1948, Wise again studied at Opportunity School for his chance at a promotion, and again he passed his exam with flying colors, earning the rank of engineer. He continued to put out fires fast, and he was well known as a man who could fix the equipment with ease.

Wise's commitment to the community extended to giving back to Opportunity School, and in the late 1940s he started teaching classes in civil defense.

He rapidly moved up the ladder in the department, being promoted to lieutenant in 1950, captain in 1953 and assistant chief in 1956.

Though he was high in demand, Wise made family a priority.

"We were always really close," said Diane Bonnell, Wise's daughter. "My father was a fabulous man, and my parents were good about doing family things together."

Bonnell has fond memories of going shopping with her father, as well as many camping trips and vacations. Wise took many videos on these occasions. At home, he helped his children with their homework.

"Everything seemed to come naturally to him," Bonnell remembered.

The family was sometimes afraid for Wise when he went out on calls, however, and for good reason: some of the blazes were downright dangerous. Several major fires took place at the Ace Box Company over the years, and large buildings

such as hotels and even a flour mill were the scenes of destruction. Sometimes chemicals were involved. The fire department also battled an arson ring for several years that targeted local construction projects.

One fierce fire in particular injured Wise badly.

"My mother got a call that my father had been in a serious accident," Bonnell remembered. "He was in a fire, and the roof had fallen in. There were three other firemen who were in the building. They were killed, but my father was saved from this fire."

Wise added, "I had to fight my way out. It hurt a little, but I made it."

Thankfully, he made a full recovery.

Wise's work in the department involved more than fighting fires, though. He was often called on for rescues and medical care.

When Bonnell was very young, Wise was on duty at the local rodeo when the wife of one of the cowboys went into labor. They tried to get to the hospital, but they couldn't get there in time, so Wise helped deliver her baby.

Bonnell remembers another incident closer to home.

"Some lady came driving down the street, and she was drunk, and she hit something in the road," said Bonnell. "She

flipped the car right in front of our house, and it slid down the hill, and I can remember my father going out and rescuing her."

Of all the ordeals he went through, Wise considers the most difficult task during his service "saving people who didn't want to be saved." In the 1960s, a man was trying to commit suicide by jumping from a roof. Wise got up on a ladder, grabbed him from behind and brought him down to safety.

In 1970, Wise sat for the civil service exam to select the Denver Fire Chief, and he earned the coveted position by acing the test with a grade of 94.997. The next-highest score was 86.

Wise was the last Denver fire chief to earn the rank by civil service. Since his retirement, the fire chiefs have been appointed by the city mayor.

Any firefighter in Denver today can tell you that Wise is a legend. He implemented many changes as chief and served

as a mentor and leader to his crew. He ordered the first use of self-contained breathing apparatuses in April 1971, and he was supportive in the move to implement wide usage of smoke detectors. He also helped start 911 service for the area, replacing the old alarms that were placed around town in public places.

"Call 911, and away we come!" Wise said of the motto his team used.

Always a people person, Wise made sure that others had equal opportunity for a career in firefighting.

"He appointed the first woman firefighter, Heather Larson, to the DFD," shared Jerry Michals, volunteer

researcher for the Denver Firefighters Museum. "He also started programs working with minority groups to make the staffing reflect the community."

Wise boosted morale in the department. Reducing the work week from 56 hours to 48 hours in 1974 certainly helped.

An article in "Class Acts: Stories from the Emily Griffith

"He was in a fire, and the roof had fallen in."



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



“Being a good firefighter,” he said, “and being a good husband and father. Those are the two best things I could do.”

Opportunity School” by Carolyn Brink, sheds further light on Wise’s impact:

“In 1969, the city’s department was nationally rated dead last, based on criteria such as the department’s ability to put out fires and staff morale. Myrle set out to raise this abysmal rating. He devised a plan so every Denver citizen would be within a minute and a half of a fire station. This meant tearing down old fire stations and building new ones in underserved neighborhoods. He was able to accomplish this solely through cost savings, without going to the voters for bond elections.”

Over time, Wise raised the DFD’s rank from last place to first in the country!

Wise had a very big year in 1976. He moved the Denver Fire Department headquarters to a new building and helped save the old building, which became the Denver Firefighters Museum. He was also named president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs that year.

In that president role, and outside of it, Wise’s impact reached far beyond Denver. He traveled the world, including Japan and Germany, training other firefighters. Wise met many people in his travels, including the mayor of Chicago and Gerald Ford.

“I went to Washington, D.C., to teach all the firemen how to do it,” Wise said. “I showed them how to put out fires fast.”

In 1987, Wise retired after 44 years in the fire service and 18 years as chief. The DFD held a farewell party for him.

“Everybody came,” Wise said, “and we enjoyed it.”

Sadly, Evelyn passed away in 2006, but Wise found a companion again in Mina Coffey, Ray’s mother. The Wises and the Coffeys had been friends for many years, and when Myrle and Mina both found themselves parted in death from their spouses, their friendship blossomed into something more. They tied the knot on Valentine’s Day 2008 and were happily married until Mina passed away in February 2015.

Wise had some health setbacks after Mina’s death, and his family knew he needed more care. At 98, he is now a resident at Life Care Center of Aurora, Colorado, where he continues to make an impact on those around him.

“He encourages everybody,” said Michelle Williams, activity director at the facility. “A lot of times he’ll just sit there and say, ‘Thank you, Lord!’ He’s the sweetest, kindest man.”

As Wise looks back on his life, he has a lot to be proud of. But when you ask him about his greatest achievements, it is his service to others he talks about.

“Being a good firefighter,” he said, “and being a good husband and father. Those are the two best things I could do.” 🙏

In 1981, millionaire industrialist Eugene Lang stood before a class of eighth-graders in the poor neighborhood of New York’s South Bronx in which he grew up. He had been asked to give a speech.

But as he stood before them, they were staring at him with blank eyes. They were not interested, it seemed, in his “motivational talk.” Their neighborhood had become a battlefield of poverty, drugs and gangs – a breeding ground of despair.

Probably 80 percent of them would not attend and complete high school. Few would ever leave the neighborhood. Fewer still would climb out of poverty.

Lang wondered what he could say that would change those dynamics.

He tossed aside his planned speech. These students didn’t need a speech; they needed a dream.

Then the words came from Lang’s mouth that may have astonished even him. “If you graduate from high school,” he told them, “I will send you to college.”

Send you to college! Was he kidding? The students



must have wondered. Sitting where they were, they could see no pathway to college for themselves.

For the next four years, Lang worked with the local school and kept the dream alive. He even nurtured his charges with tutors, trips to colleges, an open door to his office and, above all, his energetic encouragement. The results were phenomenal: All but two of the 60 teenagers finished high school. True to his word, Lang sent each of the graduates to college.

“He gave us hope,” one student said, no doubt speaking for the majority. Another one of the students – upon meeting Lang later – said to him, “Mr. Lang, we did the impossible.”

All because of a dream Eugene Lang gave them.

Author Sarah Ban Breathnach, a “New York Times” best-selling author of “Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy,” said, “The world needs dreamers, and the world needs doers. But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.”

Perhaps you are following your dream through Life Care and Century Park of positively impacting the lives of others and making the world a better place. When that beautiful dream is combined with hard work and great expectation, then the impossible can be achieved.

For when you and I believe enough in a magnificent dream, most anything can happen. 🙏

Beecher Hunter
BEECHER HUNTER
President