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**LEADER**

2017 Edition



**Unpredictable Effie**

Effie Woodruff

**Head in the Clouds**

Loyal Kelsey

**It All Changed in 1939**

Ann & Alec Kaminski



## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

She was a woman of grace and beauty, endowed with a charm that drew others to her. And if you were around Dorothy Giehm long, your laughter had a little more lilt to it and your step a bit more spring in it.

She had a love affair with life, and her ardor for it enveloped those who came near her. She pursued the relationship passionately and with determination. As a result, the fruits of peace, joy, happiness and fulfillment abounded within her soul.

Mrs. Giehm's wonderful journey into three centuries – consider that amazing statement – came to an end on Feb. 4, 2000, at Life Care Center of Tucson, Arizona, where she was a resident at the place she proudly called her home.

Less than one month before, on Jan. 10, Mrs. Giehm celebrated her 108th birthday anniversary, surrounded by family and friends. It was a remarkable and memorable occasion, with gifts, hugs aplenty, refreshments and lots of laughter.

We first met at a luncheon in the center five years earlier. A catalyst in the development of our friendship was her gregarious nature in general



and her mirth in particular. You couldn't be in her presence without the laughter. It was the magic that captivated me when she was but 103 years old and "adopted" me as her nephew.

It was the same enchantment that she cast over our entire management meeting when she came to Cleveland, Tennessee, in 1998 at 106. To all Life Care associates attending that gathering, Dorothy Giehm was an icon for what Life Care Centers of America is all about.

Even though it is a business, with issues of management contracts, mortgages, accounts payable and receivable, census, demographics and turnover, Life Care has always been about the Dorothy Giehms of this land and their male counterparts.

It is incredible to consider all that has happened since that long-shot, cold call made on Carl Campbell at his nursing home company in Wenatchee, Washington, in 1967. His trust in us gave us the opportunity to open the door of our dreams and walk through it.

As we reflect on the opening of the first facility, Garden Terrace Convalescent Center, in 1970, and the incorporation of Life Care Centers of America six years later, the only response is one of gratitude to a faithful God and the commitment of thousands of associates who live out our mission every day.

In both instances, they are extremely important to our future. And to those we do and will serve. 🙏

FORREST L. PRESTON  
*Chairman*



Cover photo by Amy Henderson Photography

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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# Never, never, never, *NEVER* give up.

• WILLIAM DAVID JONES •  
*Short-term resident*

*By Xavier Jasso*

It is the summer of 1952. Six-year-old William David Jones and his father are spending the evening in the living room of their home in Rome, Georgia. Noting the time, Jones wishes his father goodnight and heads to bed. Halfway across the living room, he collapses to the floor. Concerned, his father asks him what happened.

“Well,” responds Jones. “I really don’t know.”

Jones stands back up and begins the walk up the stairs to his bedroom. Halfway up the staircase, his legs buckle again and he falls all the way to the bottom. His father rushes over.

“You’re burning up.”

“I’m... I’m freezing.”

His father carries him to bed. That same night, the local pediatrician makes a house call to see Jones. After an examination, the doctor turns to Jones’ parents.

“It appears David has poliomyelitus.”

Striking without warning and capable of crippling or killing within hours, polio earned its

reputation as one of the world’s most feared diseases. A highly contagious virus that causes multiple levels of paralysis, polio’s peak was the very year Jones was diagnosed: 1952.

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Halfway up the staircase, his legs buckle again and he falls all the way to the bottom.

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In the United States alone, 57,879 reports of polio covered the nation in a shroud of terror. 21,269 individuals were paralyzed; 3,145 died. There was no cure for the epidemic, and the nation watched in horror as wave after wave of the horrible disease struck, knowing they were completely defenseless. The first successful vaccine would not be developed and released until 1955.

Due to the limited treatment resources at the hospital in Rome, Jones was transferred to a trauma center at Grady Hospital in Atlanta. Totally paralyzed,

Jones was placed in an isolation ward with other polio patients. Since little was known about the disease besides its symptoms and its contagious nature, the patients were often left in isolation for weeks or months. In some cases, patients would also suffer paralysis of the diaphragm and would be confined to the infamous Iron Lung machine for years.

Although he was scared and isolated, Jones’ family helped him remain hopeful. Not even an isolation chamber would keep them apart for long.

“One time my father brought a stepladder to the hospital,” recalled Jones. “He placed it against the exterior wall and climbed up and talked to me through the window. The doctors and nurses asked him, ‘Mr. Jones, what are you doing? This is an



Photo by David Smith



isolation ward!’ to which he responded, ‘Are there signs anywhere that say I can’t climb a ladder and talk to my son through the window?’”



It was eventually determined that Jones needed advanced treatment. Fortunately, Georgia was home to the nation’s most advanced polio treatment center: the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation (now called the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation), the same hospital which treated President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the nation’s most recognized polio victim. Jones’ stay at Warm Springs was funded through the national nonprofit organization March of Dimes, founded in 1938 by FDR to help combat polio.

Renowned polio doctor Robert Bennett had some discouraging news for the Jones family at Warm Springs, however.

“He looked at me and then turned to my mother,”

said Jones. “He looked at her and said, ‘There is a distinct possibility that David will never walk again.’”

Jones remembers his mother looking Dr. Bennett directly in the eye.

“There’s two or three things you may not know about us, doctor,” said Jones’ mother. “A. You don’t know David. B. You don’t know our family. And C. You don’t know the God we serve.”

Nine months later, Jones walked out of Warm Springs. He was wearing custom-made leg braces and using crutches, but he was walking.

And while God had undeniably performed a miracle that astonished many, Jones remembers that his time at Warm Springs was not an easy period of his life.

“It was a very tough time,” said Jones. “I was a child of only 6 and I was forced to be away from my family, friends and home for nine months. My family and friends would come visit me on weekends, but it was tough. I had just learned to ride a bike before I caught polio. I knew I would never be able to do that again.”

After he was released, he returned to Rome to resume schooling.

“My neighborhood school was a brick building of three stories,” said Jones. “And guess what? No elevator.”

Jones’ father requested a transfer to a school in another district that was one level, and the exception was made. When Jones began high school,

however, he faced the obstacle of stairs again.

“I decided that if I wanted to have a life, I was going to have to overcome,” said Jones. “So that was that. For four years I walked those halls, climbed those stairs on crutches and went to classes on both floors.”

Jones’ family, friends and community never stopped supporting him.

“One time after a surgery, I remember a group of football players lifting me up in my wheelchair and carrying me to the second floor of the school,” recalled Jones.

Jones graduated from West Rome High School in 1964 and was awarded the Danforth “I Dare You” Award, an award given to a select number of individuals who demonstrated exemplary leadership, courage and perseverance.

“The award was presented to me at graduation,” said Jones. “The principal had submitted my name without my knowledge – I was shocked.”

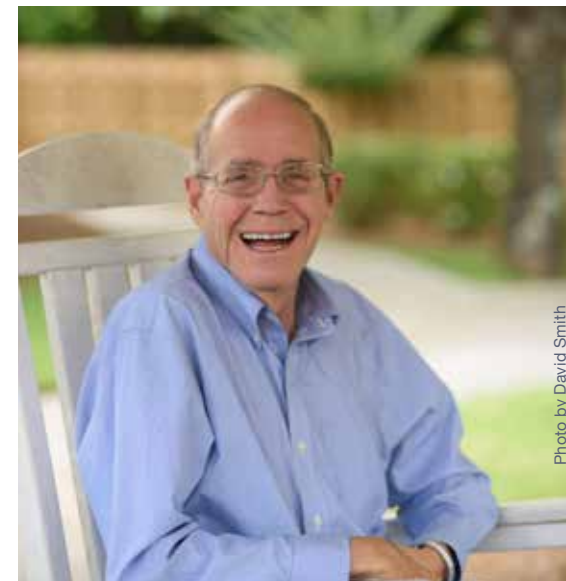


Photo by David Smith

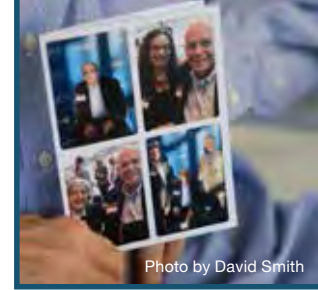


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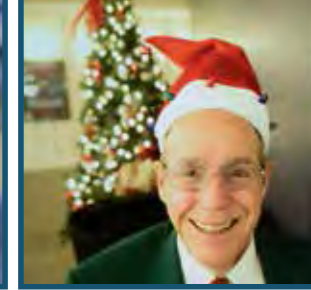


Photo by David Smith



Following high school, Jones attended Shorter College in Rome and developed a passion for photography. After graduation, he moved to Atlanta to pursue a woman he had met in college. He also entered into management with the camera company Alans.

Later down the road, Jones got a job as a sales coordinator for 3M Company. His career would carry him up the corporate ladder until he landed a position as an adhesive technician. Jones worked at 3M Company for 36 years until he retired.

But some of his biggest contributions were made outside of the office.

“During all of this, I was involved with Rotary International,” explained Jones. “Rotary International is on a quest to eliminate polio worldwide, and on several occasions they asked me to share my story at events in order to help raise support for their mission.”

During his involvement with Rotary International, Jones was also asked to go on mission trips to spread the tale of his battle with polio. To his great surprise, one mission trip traveled him over 8,000 miles to the country of Kenya.

Jones arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, to share his story about polio, spread knowledge about communicable diseases and

offer vaccinations to children and families in need.

“I remember arriving in Kenya and opening the van doors and hearing a song I was familiar with: ‘Victory in Jesus,’” said Jones. “I said to myself, ‘I’ve come to the right place. I am doing the right thing.’ I had the opportunity to travel halfway across the world and, with my story, tell people God loved me and God loved them.”

Today, in addition to his work with Rotary International, Jones still feels the drive to contribute even more, despite his limiting condition. He remains active in his community and church, ushers at the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and serves on the Planning and Zoning Committee for Lawrenceville, Georgia.

In May of 2017, he was invited to speak about polio, as well as to serve on a panel, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

“There was a room full of people there to speak about the focus of the CDC today, like communicable diseases and the opioid epidemic,” explained Jones. “The director of the CDC stands up and only mentions one person by name. Me. It was a good day.”

When asked what gives him such a drive to succeed as well as give back to the

community, Jones said: “It is my opportunity to encourage others to continue to move forward. All of us can improve. We don’t know what life holds, whether it be falling off a mountain, being in an automobile accident or suffering a broken heart at the loss of a loved one, but we can all move forward. We can all overcome.”

“I have to try and overcome,” Jones continued, with tears in his eyes. “Never, never, never give up. That is my story.”

These days, Jones faces yet another obstacle: learning to manage daily life after suffering a stroke. Despite this, Jones still finds ways to contribute his skills, including continuing to work closely with the Planning and Zoning committee as well as trying to have a positive influence on those around him.

“We always wonder in our life, ‘Why?’” Jones said. “We all have these questions of ‘Why did this happen to me? Why am I here?’ But I think I was brought here to be a witness. I was put here to make someone laugh. I was put here to help someone overcome.”

Jones successfully completed short-term therapy at Life Care Center of Gwinnett in Lawrenceville and returned home on June 17, 2017, to his two loving sons and supportive community. 🙌





Photo by Amy Henderson Photography



• EFFIE WOODRUFF •

Born a farm girl near Princeton, North Carolina, Effie Gladys Williamson Woodruff hopped on a train to Texas trusting that the tracks would lead her to a place unfamiliar. She hopped on at age 19, not because she was restless or unhappy, but because she knew she was made for more.

“You know, my mom was born out in the middle of nowhere back then,” said Woodruff’s youngest son, Jim. “There was nothing. She decided on her own that she didn’t want to stay there. She wanted to see what was out there. I thought it was good she did that. Yeah, I thought it was good she hopped on that train.”

Woodruff, along with her cousin, was on her way to join

the Women in the Air Force. They eagerly signed up and began basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

“The WAF was started in July 1948,” explained Jim, “and Mom joined in July 1949. Seems to be a bold way of thinking for a country girl to decide to uproot herself and join the military.”

Woodruff’s bold way of thinking soon took her to Colorado with WAF, where she graduated as the honor graduate from clerk typist’s school at an Air Force base in Colorado Springs.

Following graduation, she began her first assignment at Mitchel Air Force Base in New York. There, her competitive spirit and knack for sewing

landed her in a modeling competition for the WAF’s spring uniform.

She was chosen to compete on account of her self-altered, fitted uniform, which drew officials’ attention. She was selected out of 12 other women in the running, and her photo was published in publicity ads for the Air Force.

Soon after, Woodruff was selected as one of the most attractive WAFs at Mitchel and was asked to model for publicity photographs for the WAF in Long Island and New York City newspapers.

While at Mitchel, she met an Army man, James Warren Woodruff, through mutual friends. After they met, Warren was wounded while fighting



*"She got the job over there, and she said that if I moved with her that she'd buy me a horse," said Karen. "So I did. She bribed me. I did get my horse, and I met my husband at that horse stable."*



in Korea and was evacuated back to the States in January 1951. After returning to North Carolina, he quickly asked Woodruff to marry him.

On March 10, 1951, Woodruff left Mitchel AFB to marry Warren. From 1952-1959, she and her husband had four children: Lula Kathryn (Kathy), Garry Warren, James (Jim) Frank and Eva Karen.

"All I remember was we were always living around military bases 'cause Dad was in the military for 26 years and continued on to work for the government," explained Jim. "And my mom was just always working. She was working for a colonel or a general, or an admiral or a captain. She was always busy. My mom worked all the time, sometimes six days a week, and raised us kids."

Though her responsibilities continued to increase, Woodruff refused to allow them to hinder her journey to see more. So, she took her family with her. For a few years, the kids were raised in Germany on account of their parents' military duties.

Throughout their marriage, Woodruff's husband continued working at various bases in states such as North Carolina and Virginia, and she sought out positions working as a civilian in personnel, often focused on recruiting other civilians to work on various military bases and managing the new civilian hires.

She remained in personnel, or human resources, for the rest of her career.

When Warren retired in the mid-'70s, Woodruff decided to apply for a civilian personnel position with the Navy in Morocco.

Three of Woodruff's children were already grown, but the youngest, Karen, was still in high school. Woodruff refused to move to Morocco without her; however, Karen was hesitant to move because she was in the middle of her junior year. Moving to Morocco would mean starting over halfway through her high school career.

"She got the job over there, and she said that if I moved with her that she'd buy me a

horse," said Karen. "So I did. She bribed me. I did get my horse, and I met my husband at that horse stable."

In Morocco, Karen attended school while Woodruff worked during the week, but they always adventured together on the weekends.

Woodruff's never-ending thirst for knowledge also led her to take a college course with Karen in Morocco after she had graduated from high school.

"It was Western Civilization," said Karen. "She got a better grade than I did."

Woodruff's husband passed away in 1977 after 26 years of marriage. After his passing, she remained in Morocco until the base closed in 1978. She then returned to the U.S. and bought a house back in Princeton, a real fixer-upper. Amidst her travels and various jobs, this house was one of the motivations that kept bringing her back home, yet encouraged her to keep traveling and working all the more.

"She just always wanted to do something new," said Karen.

"She never stopped. She would come home for a while after an assignment or a job, work on the house for a while, run out of money, and then she'd have to get another job. The house was a showpiece. It was wonderful."



A few years after purchasing the house, Woodruff was, of course, headed out the door with a suitcase in tow. She found a job working in personnel for the United States Army Corps of Engineers in Jacksonville, Florida.

She didn't stay long in Florida. From this position, Woodruff accepted a job in Saudi Arabia, working again for USACE. Along with her responsibilities there, she found time to engage in new hobbies and form relationships with the locals.

"She loved shopping in flea markets, the souks," said Karen. "They would also go out in the desert and do different adventures. I think while there she took a trip to Kenya or South Africa. I saw pictures

of giraffes and lions. She had a lot of friends over there in Saudi Arabia, and they stayed friends."

Woodruff was not only an adventurer on land, but in water as well. While in Saudi Arabia, she received her certification to scuba dive in the Red Sea. She brought this hobby back to the States and also explored the reefs in the Cayman Islands.

In 1987, Woodruff retired for the first time, having completed 31 years of government service. Shortly after, she was hired back on by USACE and was sent to help rebuild Kuwait

after hostilities ceased during Operation Desert Storm.

Kuwait brought many risks for Woodruff, but her brave, ambitious spirit faced each risk with confidence. She was there to form trust, to bring hope and, to put it bluntly, get things done.

"She had a lot to do with putting a lot of things together for the government," said Jim. "You know, making things work. She was the person that everybody went to for getting everything done."

After Kuwait, Woodruff returned to Germany for a short period and then retired for the second time, returning home to North Carolina to work on her house. Her home provided her a place to decorate with items from her travels, to plant flowers and to enjoy, but she

never stayed long.

Woodruff, who was ready to exchange her gardening shoes for combat boots, came out of retirement for the second time and traveled to Baghdad's Green Zone with USACE from 2004-2005; coincidentally, one of her grandsons was serving in Iraq at the same time with the United States Marine Corps. She found herself, once again, in a war-torn nation and immediately dove in to help.

Baghdad was her final trip overseas.

With Woodruff, her family and friends eventually learned to stop guessing where she would travel to next. On Monday, she could be skiing in the Alps; Wednesday, riding a camel through the Great Pyramids of Egypt; Friday, touring Thailand on a water buffalo.

"She was kind of fearless," said Karen. "She would take friends with her, but if she couldn't find anybody, she would go by herself."

Her fearlessness made her unpredictable. Her unpredictability made her Effie.

Today, Woodruff resides at Life Care Center of Sandpoint, Idaho, on account of its close proximity to Karen. She continues to live a life that instills within others a desire to see more, a desire to simply hop on a train and fearlessly go. The farm was her home in the beginning, but there's no denying, she was indeed made for more. 🌻



# THE TRIALS OF RONALD DION

RONALD DION



Photo by Vick Laney

By Ryan Faricelli

One late afternoon in October 1987, renowned Florida attorney Ronald Dion walked into his home after a long day of work. Breeding and showing Chinese Shar-Pei dogs was a hobby of his, and Dion was president of the local chapter of a Chinese Shar-Pei dog association. He was changing his clothes while his family packed their van for a weekend trip to participate in a dog show when he suddenly felt ill.

"I started to vomit, run around babbling incoherently and then passed out," Dion says his daughter, who was 10 at the time, would later tell him.

It would be nearly a year before Dion woke up.

Born in Kentucky in 1952, Ronald Dion had a full childhood. His father was an executive for Pan Am and Eastern Air Lines, and his mother was quite involved in community activities while

also being a stay-at-home mother and a swimming instructor.

"I learned to roller skate at the age of 11," Dion proudly remembers. "That very same year, I became the National Roller Skating Champion."

In high school and college, Dion played piano, sang and was also an actor in plays and musicals, all of which helped him earn a full scholarship to college and law school.

Attending Florida Atlantic University, Dion earned a Bachelor of Arts before attending the University of Miami Law School. At the University of Miami Law School, Dion was the first-ever full scholarship recipient, receiving the Soia Mentschikoff Scholarship, named after the famous lawyer who was the first woman to teach at Harvard Law School before becoming dean at the University of Miami.

Dion graduated law school in 1976, earning a Juris Doctor cum laude. His first job as an attorney was working criminal appeals cases at the State Attorney's Office in the Miami prosecutor's office. A year later, Dion was the Assistant Attorney General and was about to play a part in one of the first trials ever to be nationally televised: *The State v. Ronny A. Zamora*.

Ronny Zamora was a 15-year-old charged with murdering his 83-year-old neighbor. His lawyer used the previously unheard of defense that Zamora had become intoxicated by violence he had seen on television, as Zamora was obsessed with violent shows since the age of 5. Claiming that television was responsible for the death of the victim, Zamora's lawyer subpoenaed Telly Savalas, star of the television series *Kojak*, to testify. The judge did not allow it.

"It was me and Attorney General Robert L. Shevin," recalls Dion of that famous trial. "It was very exciting. It was the first time in the United States that such a defense was used in a murder trial. This was before the days of 24/7 news coverage, and before the days of the internet and social media. For its time, it was a media frenzy. The courtroom was always packed with media and cameras."

*I am a different person. I love and appreciate those in my life in ways I never did before.*



Dion and Shevin won the case, and Zamora was sentenced to life in prison.

A reputation for winning continued to grow for Dion. He moved on to become one of South Florida's top appellate attorneys and had been strongly considered for judgeship in both Dade and Broward counties. In 1983, he found himself taking on another high-profile case, this time for a client named Joseph C. Russello.

Russello had been convicted in Federal District Court for his involvement in an arson ring. He fraudulently received insurance payments for a fire that destroyed a building he owned and was appealing the specific decision that he would need to forfeit the insurance money. It was a long shot, but Dion took the challenge to defend Russello's right to keep that money based on a law that was written unclearly.

"I was an attorney who was known for taking cases that others didn't think they could win because, more often than not, I won," explains Dion. "My client came to our firm because his was a difficult case, with not much chance to win. My firm handed it to me, because they felt I gave the client the best chance possible."

The case was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as Dion would have the honor of trying the case before the United States Supreme Court. He had

been practicing law seven years and was just a few weeks shy of his 31st birthday when he boarded a jet for Washington.

"I went into the case as I would any other case," Dion notes. "I put in the same hard work, the same hard effort, the same hours. While excited to have the opportunity, there was no time to be too excited about anything."

Dion presented his argument before the Supreme Court. He had entered the courtroom fully prepared and did the best job that he could. His opponent in the case was a lawyer from Newark, New Jersey, named Samuel A. Alito Jr. They didn't know it then, but Alito would become a Supreme Court Justice himself in 2006.

"I remember him being a formidable opponent who had the better argument on a difficult issue," recalls Dion of that day in court. "I still felt I would win the case, as I had discovered what I had thought was a loophole in the law, but he countered my argument in expert fashion."

A few weeks later, the court ruled in favor of Alito.

"When it was over, it didn't matter that I had lost," concedes Dion. "I had someone who, right or wrong, asked me to help him. And I did."

Five years later, Dion would be fighting another uphill battle, but this time, it would be for himself.

That October afternoon in 1987, a blood clot the size of a

lemon had exploded on the left side of Dion's brain. After being on life support and in a coma for nearly a year, Dion's parents weaned him off feeding and breathing tubes.

"Shortly after being removed from all the tubes, I came out of the coma and was able to move in with my parents, who dedicated their lives to helping me rehabilitate," Dion says of the beginning of his recovery. "They worked tirelessly with me on physical, occupational and vocational rehabilitation. The doctors told them that I would never be anything more than a vegetable, and my parents rejected that. They made sure I was able to learn how to feed myself, write and verbally communicate."

Dion's parents first worked with therapists to help teach him to breathe on his own again. His right side was mostly paralyzed, as were his vocal cords. Originally a right hander, Dion had to learn to write and use his left hand for everything. Two surgeries on his vocal cords were done to help with his ability to speak, and he received hyperbaric treatments and stem cell treatments. With his parents at his side, Dion was in rehabilitation with therapists or seeing doctors from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. nearly every day.

"My parents never gave up on me and ensured that I would have the best life possible," says Dion. "Though I'm no longer the

high-profile lawyer I once was, I live a more peaceful existence now – one that I never would have had if not for my parents saving me and working with me to get me to where I am today."

Every day was work, but Dion's parents also made sure he experienced life and had fun. They would take him to the movies twice each week, as well as to dinners, plays, zoos and even Disney World. He was young, in his 30s, so it was especially important to them that he interact with others and continue to be a part of society.

Today, Dion lives at Life Care Center of Altamonte Springs, Florida. He still enjoys going to the movies, as well as binge-watching Netflix, playing Rummikub with friends and visiting his family.

"I have two children, a daughter and a son," boasts Dion. "My son is a U.S. Naval officer and my daughter is an attorney with a nationally recognized law firm. My daughter also followed in my footsteps by attending the University of Miami's Law School."

On the surface, Dion doesn't remember much of his life before the aneurism. He recalls some moments, such as trials or important events, when he concentrates and talks about them. Mostly, he remembers the kind of person he was. He



describes himself as having been a workaholic.

"It is funny. Before my aneurism, I was consumed with all things work, with everything possible to be the best possible attorney," confides Dion. "Since going through such a personal tragedy, though, to get where I am today, I am a different person. I love and appreciate those in my life in ways I never did before." 🙏







Photo by Kortl Koehn

# Head in the clouds

By Hannah Buckingham

## LOYAL KELSEY

Loyal Kelsey has quite literally spent his life with his head in the clouds.

Born in Greeley, Colorado, on Oct. 2, 1933, Kelsey was the oldest of four siblings. Even at a young age, Kelsey had an adventurous side, and many of his fondest childhood memories include exploring nature and horseback riding with his two brothers and sister.

Kelsey attended Greeley High School, where he met the love of his life, Lu Steffens. As soon as the pair met, they knew they belonged together. Kelsey went on to pursue a bachelor's degree in English at the University of Northern Colorado, also located in Greeley, but Lu's parents sent her to college in Missouri in hopes that the young couple

would break up. Kelsey wrote love letters to his future bride every week, and when she returned home for summer break, they eloped.

During college, Kelsey enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and after graduating, was commissioned by the Air Force and sent to pilot school. Kelsey had never been on a plane before, let alone considered flying one, but early on in his training, it was clear that he had a natural knack for aviation.

"I fell in love with flying," shared Kelsey.

His incredible journey in flight was just beginning.

After completing four rigorous years of training, Kelsey was stationed at Travis Air Force

Base in Fairfield, California, in 1957. Lu and the couple's two young sons, Michael and Patrick, moved to California to be with Kelsey, and she vividly remembers her husband's first overseas mission.

"The first time he was ever gone for a long period of time was when he had to go to France," said Lu. "They were flying men and ammunition into Léopoldville."

Léopoldville, a former Belgian territory, is now known as Kinshasa and is the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After declaring its independence from the Belgian government in 1960, the country experienced an uprising in which the military rebelled against the new Congolese leadership.



*“Eventually, my bosses thought I should turn into a full-time briefing officer, briefing the Air Force Chief of Staff, which included the Secretary of the Air Force.”*

The Congo was thrown into a state of civil war. In order to help restore order and protect civilians, the UN authorized what would be the largest airlift since the Berlin Blockade.

Kelsey and his unit were stationed in France and made multiple flights into the Congo to assist with the operation, nicknamed New Tape. During the next four years, the Military Air Transport Service would fly a combined total of 63,798 passengers and 18,593 tons of cargo.

As is typical for military families, the Kelseys never stayed in one place for long. In 1962, the family was stationed at the Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan. During Kelsey’s tour of duty, the United States was in the midst of the Vietnam War, and Okinawa served as the Pentagon’s key transport hub for troops and supplies. While Kelsey piloted combat missions into Vietnam, his family adapted to Japanese culture.

“I started working at a Japanese newspaper, and I was the only one who spoke English,” laughed Lu. “I had to learn the language fairly quickly, as I’m sure you can imagine.”

Kelsey’s calm demeanor and natural ability allowed him to be an extremely successful fighter pilot during high-risk assignments. Michael, the couple’s eldest, remembers a particular combat mission

that placed his father in dire circumstances.

“During one of Dad’s combat missions into Vietnam, his plane got shot down,” said Michael. “As the pilot, he had the rest of his crew to think about. In that sort of situation, you’re out of your aircraft, and your only mission is to survive.”

The men parachuted out of the plane, and fortunately, Kelsey’s strategic thinking and ability to maintain composure helped him and his crew stay alive until they were rescued via helicopter.

Kelsey’s resolve would be put to the test many times throughout his illustrious flight career, but no emergency landing or engine malfunction compares to the memory of him and his two sons aboard a sinking sailboat in Japan.

“My brother and I were 6 and 8 years old when we all vacationed at Okuma Beach in Japan,” shared Michael.

“My father thought, ‘Hey, boys, wouldn’t it be a good idea to go out in a sailfish [boat]?’ And so we rented a sailfish and went out in the bay. What we didn’t know, but quickly figured out, was that they forgot to put the plug into the boat, and it wasn’t long before the boat started to fill with water and we were going to go down.”

Kelsey began to prepare his sons for the inevitable.

“As little kids, we didn’t really know what was going to happen,” said Michael. “But he just said, ‘Boys, don’t worry.

Don’t be upset. We’re going to go into the water real soon.”

The small boat tipped over and Kelsey and his boys began to tread water and await rescue. Eventually, the three were picked up and brought back to shore. Years later, Kelsey shared with his sons that he had never been more relieved to see two bobbing heads come to the surface of the water after the boat sank.

“What we always talked about was that during all of this, my mother was napping,” laughed Michael. “She, fortunately, didn’t find out until later.”

Kelsey’s life shifted direction in 1966 when he was asked by a colleague to return to Greeley and teach as an ROTC professor at the University of Northern Colorado. The family moved back to the States, and though Kelsey proved to be a skilled teacher, he was soon called to the Pentagon to serve in a prestigious role for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“At first, I was selected as a briefing officer, involved in briefing visitors at the Pentagon,” said Kelsey. “Eventually, my bosses thought I should turn into a full-time briefing officer, briefing the Air Force Chief of Staff, which included the Secretary of the Air Force.”

Much of Kelsey’s time at the Pentagon was spent in the National Military Command Center, a command and



communications center with the primary task of monitoring worldwide events for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“[The NMCC] had some of the highest security clearance in the world,” said Michael. “It takes a lot, as far as security and passes go, just to get in to visit.”

Kelsey spent little time flying during his stay in Washington, D.C., and after seven years of service there, he was ready to get back in the air.

Kelsey and his wife moved to Charleston Air Force Base in South Carolina, and in 1978, Kelsey was promoted to colonel, one of the highest ranks in the Air Force.

Eventually, the couple chose to move back west. Kelsey finished his 28-year Air Force career at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He taught aerospace studies in the ROTC program – the very same program that sparked his love for flight years ago.

After retiring from teaching, the Kelseys settled in Greeley. Even during retirement, Kelsey was passionate about sharing his talents. He operated as a private pilot and helped design and teach an aviation program at Aims Community College in Greeley.

When asked what made his father such a successful pilot, Michael replied, “I’ve always thought that we all have certain skills and gifts, and that was always his most basic one – to be an aviator. He was a natural at it.”

During the course of Kelsey’s career, he earned the Meritorious Service Medal, six Air Medals and two Air Force Commendation Medals. He landed on every continent and logged more than 6,000 hours of flight.

Today, Kelsey and Lu reside at Life Care Center of Greeley and are active members of their community.

“Lu and Loyal are like a pair of love birds around here,” said Blair Reynolds, activity director at the facility. “They wheel down the halls together and even complete each other’s sentences. Loyal is the key player in getting the men together to play cards or just visit and drink coffee. I love listening to their stories and learning about the vast amount of history they have witnessed.”

Kelsey has lived a life full of adventure and bravery. He readily admits that he has no regrets in his life, but if he could do anything again, he would love to pilot a big jet plane. Out of all of the places he’s traveled, the clouds are still Kelsey’s favorite destination.

“There’s nothing like the rush of lifting off the ground and flying,” shared Kelsey. “I love the feeling of breaking ground, pulling the gear and soaring!” 🛩️





# A STORY OF RESILIENCE

By Deanna Disbro

DOREEN MENZIES

**D**oreen Menzies has not had an easy life.

Her story is messy and hard and leaves you wanting to edit the ending and delete chapters. Menzies' life is a story of someone crossing countries and cultures, fighting against emotional exhaustion, facing abrupt transitions and coping with the devastation of loss. It's a story of a woman who chose to meet each challenge with determination, each obstacle with perseverance, each heartbreak with an iron will. It's a story of resilience.

### BRITISH GUIANA

Born in British Guiana in 1931 to an Indian mother and Scottish father, Menzies was the second of nine children and her father's favorite.

"I had a very wonderful life as a child," Menzies fondly recalls. "I was a little spoiled brat by my father."

After graduating from a Catholic high school, Menzies refused to go to college and chose, instead, to work for her father in his grocery store. Managing the store's finances gave Menzies a business foundation that would prove to be useful throughout her life.

At 16, Menzies married Ishmael Abdul, a ship chandler in town. She began helping him with his family's business of providing filet mignon to cruise ships, even learning to slaughter a cow. Her marriage was happy, and she was spoiled by her husband. Their Saturday nights were spent dancing, and she says it was the happiest time of her life.



Nine months after they were married, Menzies had her oldest son, Malcolm. The couple went on to have four more children, each one born at home with the help of a midwife. While raising her children, Menzies also managed the finances of both her father's and husband's businesses. Sadly, Menzies'



youngest was born handicapped with complications and spent his brief life in a Catholic hospital before passing away.

**“...he said I should put the kids in boarding school and return to Guyana. ... I said, ‘No way I’ll do that...’ The youngest was 3 years old.”**

At that time, British Guiana was in upheaval. Racial, social and economic unrest contributed to uprisings and riots throughout the country. Demonstrators burned down three rental properties owned by Menzies’ family. As the violence hit close to home, her husband suggested she take the children to London.

He planned to sell the family business and join them. However, the riots eventually

ended, and British Guiana gained independence in the mid-’60s to become what we know as Guyana. Menzies’ husband never joined his family in London.

“After the riots were over, he said I should put the kids in boarding school and return to Guyana,” says Menzies.

“I said, ‘No way I’ll do that...’ The youngest was 3 years old.”

Her husband chose to stay in Guyana to avoid becoming what he considered “second class” in another country. Menzies would only see him once more before he passed away in 2015.

#### ENGLAND

In a new country, with four children and no income, Menzies overcame the odds. Her brother, who also lived in England at the time, encouraged her to do what she did best – entertain. With his financial assistance and chauffeuring, she went to culinary school. After she graduated, she went on to become a manager at the famous Lyon’s Corner House on Oxford Street. This would be the only job she worked during her time in England.

Because of her dedication and persistence, Menzies’ career in London was a success. She was able to buy a home and provide for her children, paying for each one’s way through college.

However, with this success came unexpected emotional exhaustion. The responsibilities of caring for her home, family and the restaurant became overwhelming, and Menzies struggled through a bout of depression. Frequent trips to her doctor and the hospital left her fatigued and in desperate need of a lifestyle change.

“I was tired of taking care of everyone and not taking care of myself,” says Menzies.

So, she packed her bags, said goodbye to her children and headed for New York in 1974.

#### UNITED STATES

Menzies sold her home in England and bought a home in Brooklyn, New York. She quickly began a busy and successful career working for a law firm on Madison Avenue – Rosenman, Colin & Freund. Rosenman, the founder of the firm, was a senior advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt and President Harry Truman. He played a role in the war crimes trials, as well as offering his counsel as a speechwriter for both presidents.

Menzies was responsible for catering and event-planning for the firm, making sure each event and party was meticulously planned and perfect. Cocktail parties, deposition luncheons and fancy dinners were her world, and she loved it.

Eventually her daughters moved to the U.S. and bought homes in Palm Bay, Florida. Menzies decided it was time to join them and quit her job

with the firm. She bought a large home in the same country club community where her daughters lived and hosted family throughout the year.

**“I’ve always said He carried me... God carried me. I couldn’t do it.”**

Her ability to host inspired Menzies to go through a training program to become licensed to run an assisted living facility in her home. For the next 20 years, she cared for seniors, typically Alzheimer’s patients. She facilitated five residents at a time and had a staff working out of her home to provide food, medication and housekeeping for them, ensuring her residents were well cared for.

In 2014, Menzies’ son Malcolm suddenly went into a coma and passed away. She was devastated.



Menzies recalls that he spent every holiday with her, flying to Palm Bay from England. The two were close, and he took his responsibilities as the oldest very seriously.

“The only thing I have not accepted [in life] is the death of my son,” shares Menzies. “He did everything for me.”

With the news of his death, Menzies’ health began to decline rapidly and she began falling frequently. She came to Life Care Center of Palm Bay after several falls left her in need of therapy.

She continues her love of parties by participating in events at the facility. Her presence in the facility has been a blessing to her fellow residents and staff, continuing her legacy of entertaining.

“She builds relationships between residents and aims at improving the quality of life for fellow residents,” shares Nancy McGoldrick, executive director. “She is a delight to our associates and always keeps us on our toes due to her comical nature, knowledge and culture with her travels.”

Menzies is now the proud grandmother to 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren and enjoys doting on them and provides a strong example of determination. Menzies credits her ability to overcome her challenges to her faith in God.

“I’ve always said He carried me,” says Menzies. “God carried me. I couldn’t do it.”

Her spirit of perseverance is seen even in the advice she offers to those who may be going through their own struggles.

“Keep the faith,” she says, “and do the right thing. Do what is expected of you, no matter how hard it seems.”

And she has done just that. Amidst loss, abandonment, depression and change, she has kept the faith and offers the world a beautiful story of resilience.

Tórshavn





# A Life of **Energy**

JAMES WHEELER

By Ryan Faricelli

Celebrating  
**100 Years**  
Talkeetna, Alaska

Photo by Vick Laney



Putney, West Virginia, was a town deep in the Appalachians, established for the Hatfield-Campbell Creek Coal Company. In its heyday, Putney consisted of 100 company-owned houses, a church, a doctor's office and a school that supported the families of 400 miners shoveling 300,000 tons of coal each year.

"Putney was a coal-mining town," remembers James Wheeler, the son of one of those miners. "A big one."

Wheeler was born in Putney in the summer of 1930. He had five brothers and two sisters and spent his free time after school playing ball with the other kids. He attended the small country schoolhouse in town and started working in the mine like his father when he was just 16.

"It was bad," says Wheeler of his time underground. "I was on my hands and knees with water running down my back."

That same year, Wheeler's life would change when he met Etta Yvonne Barnes.

"I was working in the mines," Wheeler shares. "She came by the company store where I was at, and I saw her. We've been married 64 or 65 years now."

Refusing to spend his life in the unsavory conditions of the mine, Wheeler quit his job and went back to school to learn to be a pipe fitter at Morris Harvey College in Kanawha County, West Virginia (now the University of Charleston).







## THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE

showing the pump station (PS) sites



Once finished with school, Wheeler left West Virginia to lay pipe in Nigeria.

"It wasn't bad," Wheeler says of the two years he spent in the African nation. "But, it was hot."

From the heat of Nigeria, Wheeler's trade took him to the frigid cold of Alaska as oil grew more popular than coal as a source of energy. The mines in Wheeler's hometown of Putney shut down, and the town was abandoned around the same time a huge field of oil was discovered near Prudhoe Bay in northern Alaska. That oil had to be moved to Valdez Bay in southern Alaska, and what would become commonly known as the Alaska Pipeline began construction in 1974.

"I was probably the first one they sent to Prudhoe Bay," says Wheeler. "They hadn't hired anybody yet when I got there."

The pipeline system would run 800 miles, making it one of the largest pipeline systems in the world. The pipeline is 48 inches in diameter and can move more than 2 million

barrels of oil each day. On average, it takes 11.9 days for oil to travel the entire length of the pipeline as it moves through 11 pumping stations at 3.7 miles per hour.

Engineers and builders faced extreme cold temperatures while working in the isolated and difficult terrain. Much of the ground was frozen solid permafrost.

*The pipeline system would run 800 miles, making it one of the largest pipeline systems in the world.*

"I put it together," explains Wheeler. "They would bring pipe in with a bulldozer and side booms. They'd bring it in to me, I'd put it together, and then the welders would weld it. We moved with the pipe construction, but it was cold. It was so cold, you didn't think."

Wheeler retired when the Alaska Pipeline was completed in 1977. He and his

wife returned to West Virginia, settling in Charleston. They enjoyed retirement there until one day they awoke to find themselves in the middle of a disaster.

"We went to bed one night," says Wheeler. "The next morning, we heard someone pounding on the side of the house. When we got up, there was a boat there to get us out. The water went up to about five or six feet in our house!"

Waking to such a start certainly got Wheeler's energy flowing, but he wasn't scared.

"It did set my wife up a bit," Wheeler laughs.

After the flood, Wheeler and his wife made the decision to move to Ocala, Florida, where one of their daughters lived.

Today, Wheeler lives at Life Care Center of Ocala. You can always find him out and about talking to everyone he meets around the facility. While his days of moving around the world may have come to a close, he is without a doubt still filled with energy. 🐶





# Pass It On



By Breanna Tucker

“It seemed like a very common life to me,” said Mary LeFavre. But LeFavre’s life as a World War II-era nurse has been anything but common.



LeFavre did not dream of becoming a nurse as a little girl. She did not play pretend surgeon or try to bandage skinned knees. Her career as a nurse began when she heard a call to arms, an opportunity to serve her country at a time when it needed it most.

Born on Jan. 12, 1925, in rural Dewitt, Missouri, LeFavre grew up in a part of Dewitt known as “Gumbo Bottoms.”

Like most young girls, she was unaware of what life would hold for her but was excited to see what opportunities would come her way.

LeFavre graduated from Brunswick High School in Brunswick, Missouri, at 17, during the height of World War II. She knew her family did not have the finances to put her through



college, and she needed a job. The war effort had created many opportunities for work that would allow individuals to also serve their country. With this in mind, LeFavre

attempted to enlist in the WAVES program at the Chillicothe Navy Recruitment Center but was turned away due to her young age.

LeFavre, however, was not upset about being turned away. As she said, “I never really liked school, and I was kind of relieved

that I didn’t have to go right on to school at that moment.”

As a result, LeFavre sought another outlet to serve. In 1943, she moved to Kansas City, Missouri, to work for the Army Ordinance Department. Her main job was to clean and resalvage parachute packs, which were filled with supplies that soldiers fighting overseas would need to survive, such as blankets, medicines, splints, gloves and socks.

“It was really kind of sobering,” reflected LeFavre. “Those packs had been dropped behind enemy lines and then picked up by the United States Army trucks to be distributed. We would clean out the packs and salvage everything that was salvageable and start packing again.”

By this time, the United States was suffering from a lack of nurses to care for those abroad as well as those at home. In order to fill the need, Congress established the United States Cadet Nurse Corps in 1943 under the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt. Women ages 17 to 35 with a high school diploma were encouraged to apply.

Photo by April Austin Images





*The days were not always easy. At times, she questioned her decision to enroll, but she was determined to succeed.*

The program would pay for an accelerated nursing degree program with tuition, room and board, uniforms and textbooks, along with an additional stipend for each student. In return, the cadets were required to serve for the duration of World War II.

LeFaivre learned about this opportunity through a billboard advertisement posted on Hospital Hill in Kansas City.

“The billboard had a picture of a nurse in a uniform, with a statement from President Franklin Roosevelt encouraging women to join,” recalled LeFaivre. “I remember they were offering free tuition and free uniforms. I had a happy feeling, and it was beautiful to have the opportunity.”

She pondered her decision for quite some time. The deciding factor for her was some words of advice from her mother who once told her, “This war will be over, and you will be standing around wondering what you are going to do. You have got to have a job.”

With that, LeFaivre decided to pursue the program and, ultimately, a career in nursing.

“When this opened up, I really took a hard look at it for a while and decided that it would be my best choice, my best plan for a career of some kind,” said LeFaivre. “Something to make my own living. That’s

the way it happened.”

LeFaivre was inducted into the United States Army Cadet Nurse Corps in 1944 and began nursing school on Feb. 14, 1944. She attended school at Saint Mary’s Hospital on Hospital Hill in Kansas City.

LeFaivre’s first steps into Saint Mary’s were uncertain, but she knew it was where she should be.

“I think I was probably more scared than anything else,” chuckled LeFaivre. “It was an awesome decision to sign up my life for three years. To me, that was a lifetime. But it turned out alright; God is good.”

The days were not always easy. At times, she questioned

her decision to enroll, but she was determined to succeed.

“I would have stayed with it until I got kicked out, I guess!” said LeFaivre. “I would not fail my mother.”

By the time she graduated from nursing school in May of 1947 and passed the nursing state board to become a registered nurse, World War II had ended. LeFaivre was notified that she might be called back to action if necessary, but the need never arose.

While LeFaivre never got to serve overseas, she feels a sense of pride and honor that she had the opportunity to be part of this historic program.

“I will always thank Mr. Roosevelt for coming up with the Cadet Nurse program,” remarked LeFaivre. “I think that was a tremendous blessing from him.”

LeFaivre’s career after nursing school was full of many wonderful opportunities.

In 1947, she moved to Marshall, Missouri, where she began working at Fitzgibbon Memorial Hospital. She was a surgery and emergency room nurse there, and she remembers being on call for 24 hours at a time.

After some time at Fitzgibbon Memorial, LeFaivre decided that she wanted to switch to industrial nursing. She took a job at the shoe factory in Marshall before moving back to the Kansas City area.

In Kansas City, she worked at various industrial companies,

including Western Electric, Allis Chalmers and the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant.

“I worked in the infirmaries,” stated LeFaivre. “It was like a walk-in clinic: no bedside care, walk-in patients, and we worked under a physician.”

She worked at the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant until she retired from the company in 1989.

After retiring, LeFaivre moved to a rural part of Alabama, where she traveled and served as a home health nurse for about four years. She then returned to Carrollton, Missouri, to be closer to her family.

Her travels did not end in Alabama. LeFaivre continued to travel around the United States during some of her later years. Her nephew, Bill Boelsen, reflected on this time in her life.

“After she retired, she took some of these bus trips. ... They go to Washington D.C., Washington State and out west,” said Boelsen. “She did quite a bit of that after she retired. She had some fun times in her later years.”

LeFaivre’s talents extend beyond nursing. She is an avid quilter and embroiderer who has an array of handiwork to show for her skills.

“Not only has she helped heal people with those hands, but she has made many

beautiful things with her hands,” said Misty Kemble, social worker at Life Care Center of Carrollton, where LeFaivre now lives.

“She’s always been such a generous, giving woman,” said Trisha Rapien, LeFaivre’s great-niece. “She has been very forthcoming with quilts. If she thought somebody needed it, or to cheer them up, or if a family member like my girls



got married... she’d do a quilt for them. She just has a very kind heart.”

LeFaivre has undoubtedly touched the lives of many people throughout her years in nursing. Today, she continues to touch the lives of associates and residents at Life Care Center of Carrollton with her kind spirit, caring personality and strong faith in God.

“She’s always had, what I like to call, a good soul,” said

Rapien. “She’s always been a very compassionate person with everything she’s done. Her nursing and doing that in her younger years probably instilled much of that through her life.”

LeFaivre’s compassion has affected more than just human patients. Her love for small animals and horses compelled her to rescue many animals. Rapien remarked, “There is that part of nursing – that nurturing again. She has saved a lot of animals in her lifetime.”

Her willingness to answer to a higher call, to serve others even when she did not know where it would lead her, is truly remarkable.

As Boelsen said: “When you are a nurse, you are dedicating yourself to doing good things for other people. Basically, that was her life.”

When asked what she wants people to remember about her life’s story, LeFaivre paraphrased a quote from Guideposts Magazine: “Pass it on. If you have a good day, pass it on. If somebody

has a good day the next day, encourage them to pass it on. If you have good luck, take somebody’s hand and help them. Pass it on.”

With a life dedicated to caring for others, Mary LeFaivre has definitely passed it on. 🐾





# TALES OF A TREASURE- HANDLER

FRED RYMER

By Heidi Pino

Fred Rymer, a resident at The Heritage Center in Morristown, Tennessee, has spent his life handling treasures of all kinds. Sometimes they were his own. But many times they belonged to others.

Regardless, he has lived Christ's Golden Rule, treating others as he would want to be treated. Whether family or strangers, everyone was in good hands with Rymer.

Rymer was born on Jan. 26, 1930, in Hamblen County, Tennessee, right at the beginning of the Great Depression. It was a difficult time to grow up but an experience that would forever make him hold tight to the true treasures in life.

He and his father, Arthur Rymer, were blessed to have jobs with the Railway Express Agency. The precursor to today's Federal Express and UPS, the

REA was a goods and packages delivery service that spanned the United States. It was owned by 86 railroads, which would provide railway cars attached to passenger trains for the REA to use.

Rymer's job was to take mail off the trains. One day, he got to see someone famous.

"I remember him telling me that Elvis Presley was on the train," shared Rymer's daughter, Diana Mullins.

"The train stopped, and all these people gathered to get a glimpse of Elvis Presley."

As railway travel became less popular, the REA depended more and more on delivery trucks, and Rymer's role changed. He began driving a truck from Roanoke, Virginia, to Knoxville, Tennessee. The dark green REA trucks were a familiar sight throughout America with their red and white diamond logo.

During his almost 20 years with the Railway Express Agency, Rymer found something more precious than any cargo: Dorothy Lambert.

Dorothy lived in Greene County, Tennessee, one of four children raised by their father, who worked as a carpenter.

Rymer was enchanted by this young lady and started dating her. They frequented a restaurant in downtown Morristown called the L and W, and it wasn't long before Rymer knew she was the one for him. The couple married on June 10, 1950.

Rymer started calling his new bride Ms. Muffin, a term of endearment he continues today.

When Rymer was asked what he loves about Dorothy, he answered, "Everything."

The Rymers went on to have two children. Mullins was born in 1952 when the couple was living briefly in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and her brother,



Photo by David Smith



Jeff Rymer, was born in 1955. Sadly, Jeff passed away in the early 2000s.

As the kids were growing up, business at the REA was starting to decline. Rymer found a new opportunity: working as a rodeo clown.

Rodeo clowns entertain the crowds with jokes and antics but have an even more important role. They jump in the arena when a rider is thrown from a horse or bull and distract the animal so that the rider has a chance to safely exit the ring.

Mullins remembers this as a wonderful time for her family. Rymer would either perform in town at the local stadium or take the family with him when the rodeo traveled from town to town. They would go as far as Hot Springs, North Carolina.

True to rodeo clown tradition, Rymer had a funny name for his character: Easy Money.

Even the livestock had monikers. One staple of the local rodeo was a bucking horse named Sad Sam.

"That was the craziest horse I've ever seen in my life," said Mullins. "It didn't go in a straight line. It would go sideways."

Life at their Morristown home was good. Though Rymer worked and Dorothy was a housewife, both parents were active in their children's lives.

"I couldn't ask for better parents," Mullins said. "They were always behind us 100 percent. My daddy was a very

good provider. We weren't rich, but we had everything we needed."

Mullins remembers her father teaching her to drive as soon as she was old enough, partly so that Dorothy would be taken care of since she had never learned to drive. That way, if the family needed anything, Mullins could drive them wherever they needed to go.

As the children got a little older, Rymer and Dorothy were able to share another love together: antiques.

"Daddy started out collecting clocks," said Mullins. "I'd say that they had about 15-20 in their home, and it just escalated from there. They would go up north trying to find 'goodies,' as he called them, and bring them back here."

They started collecting in the early 1960s. Rymer loved to find good oak furniture, while Dorothy had another favorite item.

"Mama collected dolls because growing up, they didn't have very much," said Mullins.

The years passed, and Rymer and Dorothy found themselves caring for their aging family members – first for Rymer's grandparents, then his parents and then his father-in-law until those generations had passed away. And in everything the couple carried on the same spirit of love they had inherited.

Eventually, the Rymers rented a historic house in Russellville, Tennessee,

the building that served as the winter headquarters of Confederate Gen. James Longstreet in 1863-1864. This was the winter after his army's defeat at Gettysburg. Longstreet had just been beaten back by the Union from the Siege of Knoxville, and he brought his troops to the Nenney homestead to re-outfit.

While the Rymers lived in the back of the house, they turned the front into their own antique store, The Bird's Nest.

"One of the rooms upstairs Daddy wallpapered with newspaper, so they would come in and start reading the wall," Mullins remembered.

Among the antiques, Mullins remembers lots of glassware, butter churns, crocks, rolling pins and Civil War guns.

"There was just tons of stuff, different things," she said.

The Bird's Nest closed after the Rymers had lived there for 13 years. They moved back to Morristown, and eventually the Lakeway Civil War Preservation Association saved the house from destruction by a developer. The organization turned it into the General Longstreet Headquarters Museum, featuring local Civil War artifacts, like a Bible from the Bethesda Church, which was used as a Confederate field hospital.

Rymer soon had the chance to work at another place he loved – the bowling alley. The East End Bowling League in Morristown needed a manager

at one point, so Rymer stepped up to help run it.

"I used to be pretty good," Rymer said of his bowling skills.

The Rymers remained active in the community. They frequently volunteered at Life Care Center of Morristown, about three miles from The Heritage Center, and would visit the residents and assist with bingo games.

The Rymers loved all generations, too, especially their seven grandchildren – five through Jeff and two through Mullins.

"Mom helped with all the grandkids," Mullins said. "She was just a motherly type."

Mullins added that her parents would often babysit her sons when she would go to work. Sometimes they would take the boys to a local diner with them.

"They thought that was the greatest thing ever," Mullins said.

Unfortunately, Dorothy developed dementia, and Rymer went through some health challenges as well. They moved in to The Heritage Center in 2013. Rymer still treats his wife

with tenderness, and she still gives him kisses.

Rymer's life has been one of handling many treasures with care – from the packages he delivered with the Railway Express Agency to the historic artifacts and antiques he dealt in at The Bird's Nest.

But his true treasure has been people – the rodeo riders he protected, the seniors he served, the parents he took care of in their last days, his wife, his children and his descendants.

And that's treasure indeed. 🐾

*"But his true treasure has been people – the rodeo riders he protected, the seniors he served, the parents he took care of in their last days, his wife, his children and his descendants."*



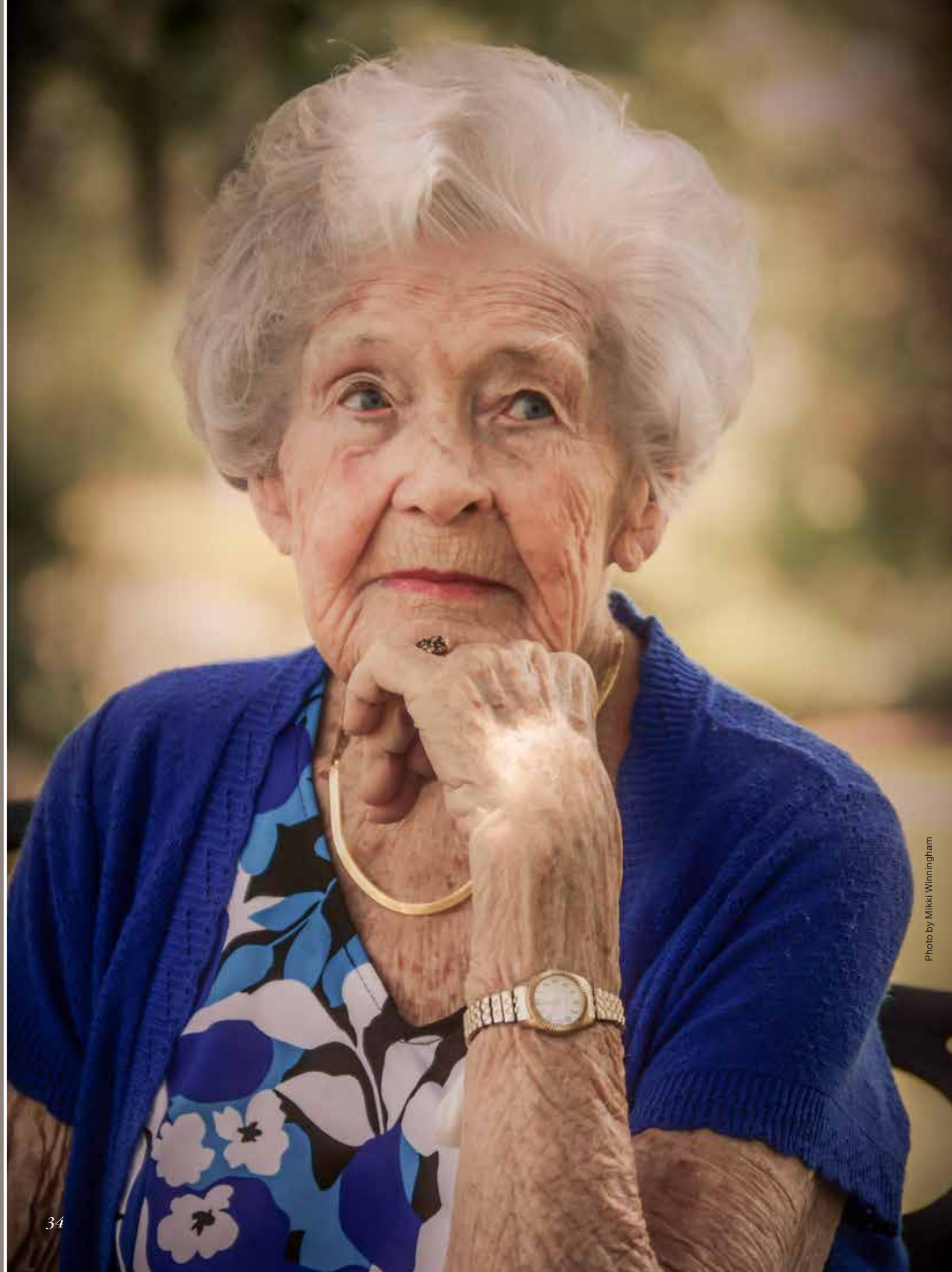


Photo by Mikki Wingham

# It All Changed in 1939

• ANN & ALEC KAMINSKI •

By Leigh Atherton

“I was standing in the background alone, and my eyes fell on that girl. And suddenly I lost interest in everything that was going on around me. A fellow officer walked up to me and started to wonder what it was that had such a hypnotic effect on me. He too noticed that charm that radiated from her, and he made a remark along those lines. Then he turned to me and asked what I thought about this girl. Without turning my face away from her, I said, ‘I’m going to marry her.’”

It was 1945. World War II was finally over.

Alec and Ann led separate and dangerous tales, with no idea that the end of the war held the beginning of their love story. The paths that brought them together were full of danger, excitement and bravery.



## ALEC

It all changed in 1939.

For Alec Kaminski, his pursuit of education was about to begin. He had served his mandatory year of Polish military service and was planning his next steps at the university.

But when Hitler began fighting for new territory in Europe, with his eyes set on Poland first, it all changed – in 1939, when Alec was just 19.

Alec was called back into active duty as the Poles prepared to defend their country. His unit was sent to defend Poland’s southwest border. The German forces were too strong, and his

unit was forced to slowly retreat toward Warsaw.

Poland surrendered in September 1939, and Alec set off for France to rejoin the ousted Polish troops. Getting out of Poland, which was then under German occupation, was easier said than done. He and a friend made the difficult journey through Poland, across the border into Czechoslovakia and then into Hungary.

The trek through Hungary was cut short when Alec and his friend were caught and put in jail. While they did manage to escape, they were not able to retrieve their identification papers. Alec did not





give up, though, because his goal was to make it to France so that he could serve his country.

Alec managed to make it to Yugoslavia, where, because of his lack of papers, he assumed someone else's identity and boarded a ship to Marseille, France. When he finally arrived in France, his platoon commander from officer school helped Alec get the correct identification papers.

Just as Alec made it to France, that country, too, fell to the Germans, and the Polish soldiers were sent to England, the home base of the exiled Polish government. Alec and his fellow troops finally landed in Scotland, where they spent the majority of the war.

In Scotland, Alec was trained as a paratrooper and then, in turn, trained other paratroopers. The idea was that the troops were preparing to one day liberate Warsaw. Although ready and prepped for battle, Alec's unit was never sent to fight. The Germans began retreating after D-Day, but Alec was still ready and willing to serve the Polish Army in any way possible. He was sent to Germany, near the Dutch border, to occupy territory as

the Germans continued their retreat.

Soon after, their unit heard about a POW camp for Polish girls that had just been liberated. Alec visited the camp in Niederlangen to see if he could find a friend's girlfriend who had been captured during the war. Alec did find her and helped orchestrate a reunion for his friend and girlfriend. The officers then asked the girlfriend if she could bring 17 of her friends to a party with them.

It was at this party that Alec met Ann.

#### ANN

It all changed in 1939. Countess Hanna Jozefa Janina Orłowska – Ann for short – was part of the Polish intelligentsia. Her father, Count Gustaw Orłowski, worked as a starosta (similar to a governor) in Poland. He, along with his baroness wife and only daughter, enjoyed life at the family castle in Sluzewo. Ann's childhood was spent exploring the thousands of acres surrounding Sluzewo, attending the town's Catholic church,

studying with private tutors and, as an only child, playing with the children of their loyal servants.

But when Hitler began viewing members of the intelligentsia as a threat, it all changed – in 1939, when Ann was just 15.

Forced to flee the estate, Ann and her parents ended up with family in Warsaw. The Germans closed schools, and secret schools were then started. Luxury was replaced with survival.



Life was different in Warsaw, but it went on nonetheless.

In 1941, Ann was given the opportunity to serve her country as part of the AK, the Polish resistance. Although Poland was occupied by enemy troops, the Polish people had not given up. A strong underground movement existed to encourage those remaining in Poland to keep fighting. Ann's cousin Danka inspired her initial involvement, but Ann quickly paved her own way and joined the Parasol Unit. This specific unit was so secretive that everyone used fake names – nobody knew who anyone was, but it did not matter because you just did what you could to help your country. Ann would later receive Poland's highest recognition for heroism and courage, the Virtuti Militari medal, for her service to the Parasol Unit.

Ann served as a courier for the resistance throughout World War II. During her duties, she was injured multiple times, the most serious of which happened in 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising. Beginning on Aug. 1, 1944, the resistance led the uprising to liberate Warsaw from German occupation. Shooting, bombing and fighting

continued for several weeks, and Ann was in the middle of it all.

"I was tired because during the days while the fighting was constantly going on, I was a courier," said Ann. "I stood on patrol. I prepared meals. I nursed the wounded, and I dug out buried friends."

The old city of Warsaw became a pile of rubble where there was no place to hide, but the fight continued.

Around Sept. 15, 1944, Ann's ankle was shattered. She was taken to the basement of a building serving as a hospital. Because of all the bombings, there were no actual buildings left, only the foundations and basements. Those who could walk needed to evacuate, and the ones who could not walk were left at the makeshift hospital, including Ann.

"It turned very quiet," shared Ann. "There was no bombing. ... Then I heard shooting again, not like machine gun bullets, but rather, single, systematic shots, one after the other."

Suddenly an SS soldier burst into her room. He pulled the screaming boy in the bed next to her into the hall and shot him.

"The SS man came back to my bed and asked if I was a soldier. I said, 'No.' He pulled the blanket off me and saw my Panzer blouse." (Panzer blouses were actually German clothing, and Ann's unit had raided a German stash. Wearing the clothing was a symbol of fighting in old-town Warsaw.)

He left as abruptly as he came but returned quickly with a black dress and cheap fur wrap.

"He told me to change quickly," explained Ann. "The SS man came back soon and said, 'Are you wondering why I did this?' He said, 'All my brothers are killed now, and I thought that if I saved your life, then maybe God will save the life of my sister.'"

While Ann's life was spared, she had suddenly become a prisoner of war at the mercy of the Germans. She was the only survivor of the hospital massacre.

Ann was transported by cattle train to a POW camp





"This was a big war, and I was part of the action that was conquering Germans," said Ann. "My heart was beating from excitement, and the machine gun on my shoulder felt like the most gorgeous diamond."

where a German nurse tended to her wounded ankle. After two months, she was transferred to another camp where conditions were harsh. They were forced to sleep two to a bed. Their bunks were infested with lice, and food rations were small.

In the spring of 1945, Ann was still in the POW camp, and she was down to her last potato.

Suddenly she saw some action on the outside of the camp. It was a soldier in a khaki uniform and a black beret. He walked to the barbed wire fence and said something in Polish which translated to, "Hi, comrade."

"I have no words to describe the joy and enthusiasm that followed," said Ann. "The tanks pulled down the wired fence. They killed the SS commander

of our camp while the rest of the guards were taken as prisoners."

A red and white Polish flag was raised over the freed camp, and they received canned food. The girls were soon put to work defending the camp.

"This was a big war, and I was part of the action that was conquering Germans," said Ann. "My heart was beating from excitement, and the machine gun on my shoulder felt like the most gorgeous diamond."

Shortly thereafter, British troops joined them at the camp, and the girls were relieved of their security duties. They were given British battle dresses and moved to another camp in Niederlangen.

Finally, on May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies. Ann listened to the news

from London on the radio and learned that the Yalta peace terms included giving Poland to Stalin's Soviet Union.

"At that moment, I knew all of our efforts were for nothing and that we lost," said Ann. "I cried for a very long time."

Ann had fought hard for her country, and her resilient spirit was evident throughout her many battles, injuries and adventures. That same resilient spirit helped her slowly begin to build a new, post-war life.

Not long after the war ended, Ann and 17 of her friends were invited to a dinner party with Polish officers.

It was at that dinner party that Ann met a handsome Polish officer named Alec.

Alec and Ann began dating shortly after that chance meeting at the officers' party. The war had changed everything for them. Ann's mother, father and aunt all died in concentration camps, and her family's castle and estate were destroyed. Alec's family survived the war, but they were stuck in Poland under the new communist government.



The couple married on July 13, 1946, and moved to London so Alec could attend school. He earned a degree in chemistry and became a chemical engineer who specialized in synthetic rubber. Alec's work eventually took them to Canada and then the United States. Ann was a stay-at-home mom for their two children, Christopher (1947) and Wendy (1960).

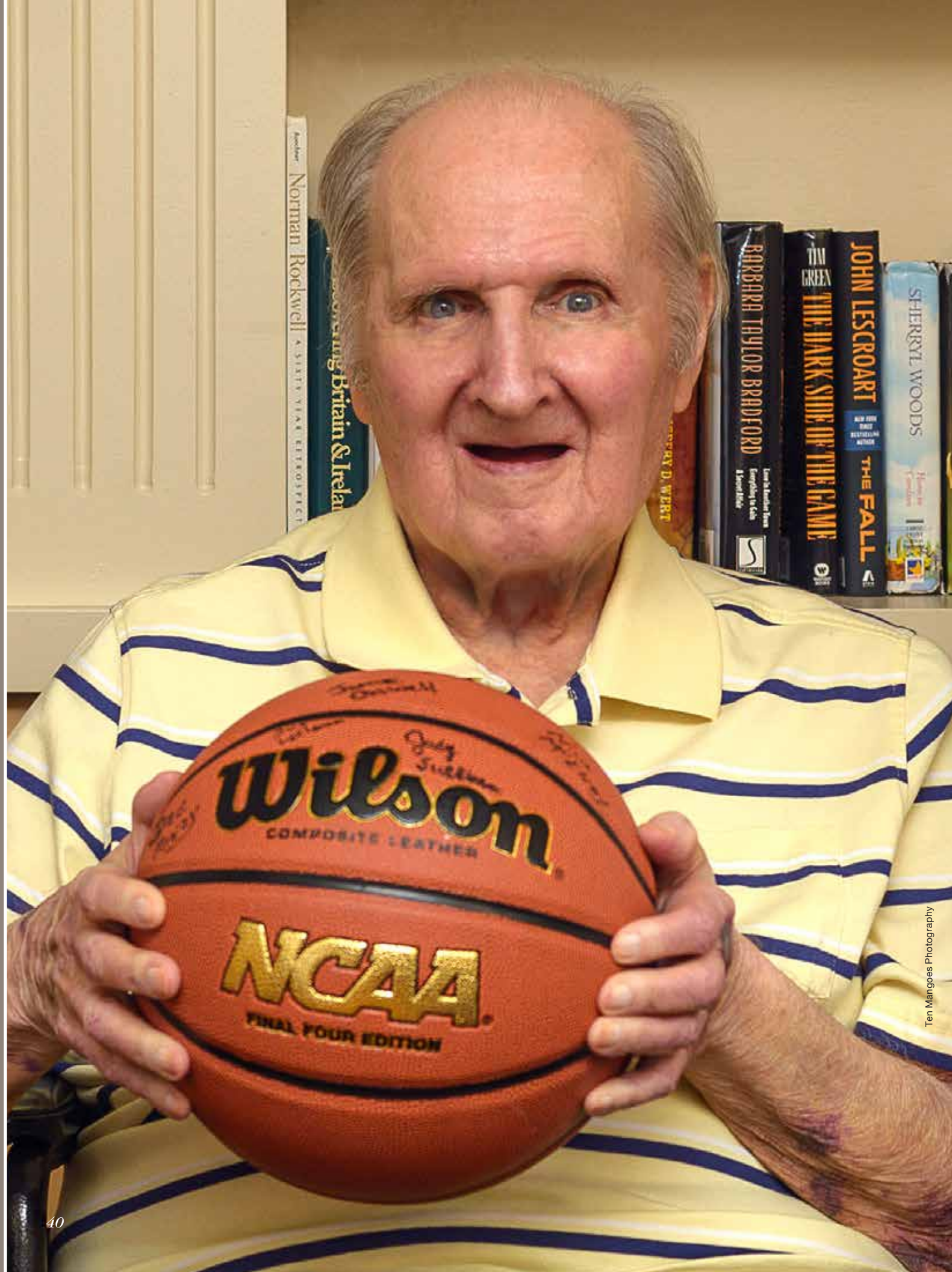
Though one worked for the Polish army and the other for the Polish resistance, their goal was the same: serve and liberate Poland. The world changed in 1939. The Kaminskis' world changed again at a party in 1945. But, this time the change was for good. It was the beginning of a love story that would span more than 70 years.

Though one worked for the Polish army and the other for the Polish resistance, their goal was the same: serve and liberate Poland.

*Editor's note: Ann Kaminski is a resident at Life Care Center of Charleston in North Charleston, South Carolina. Alec Kaminski was also a resident at the facility until he passed away as this article was being prepared for print. This article is printed in his memory and with permission from Ann and their family.*







Ten Mangoes Photography



# For the Love of the Game

ANDY LASKA

By Dara Carroll

March 25, 1947. As the final seconds ticked off the clock inside the Garden, a sold-out crowd of 18,445 roared with excitement. The Holy Cross men's basketball team, from Worcester, Massachusetts, had just beaten heavily favored University of Oklahoma 58-47.

This wasn't just any Garden – it was Madison Square Garden, the center of the basketball universe. And, this wasn't just any victory. It was the NCAA Championship game. In a tournament synonymous with Cinderella stories, Holy Cross' improbable win was its first.

A weathered photo captures the moment Coach "Doggie" Julian accepted the championship trophy. The picture is visibly creased by the hands of time, but the jubilant faces of the players surrounding Julian still look ageless. They are the faces of innocent youth, unbridled talent and limitless possibilities. And there, on the front row, is Andy Laska.

It was an unforgettable moment for 21-year-old Laska. When the team returned by train

to Worcester's Union Station the next day, he was shocked to find 35,000 ecstatic hometown fans waiting for them and cheering their names. Holy Cross, after all, had less than 1,500 students.

"Suddenly, they were superstars," said daughter Diane Laska-Nixon. "They still are."

The experience became an indelible landmark on a path that would lead Laska to legendary status in New England basketball history.

Laska first learned the rules of basketball at the Lincoln Square Boys Club in Worcester, just down the road from his

boyhood home. Laska and his three brothers could walk to the Club, and as Laska developed his passion for the game, he charmed those around him with his charisma. In 1938, they elected him as the "First Mayor of the Worcester Boys Club."

"It meant they liked him," said Laska's oldest daughter, Donna Ingraham. "He was a role model for the other boys. A natural leader."

The son of Albanian immigrants, Laska excelled in several sports, including baseball and football, but it was on the basketball court that Laska's star





shone the brightest. He played varsity basketball all four years at North High School, making the all-New England team his senior year and leading the Polar Bears to the New England championship game. During that '43 season, Laska was captain and averaged 20 points a game – for a team that only averaged 39.

Like many of his peers, Laska was drafted out of high school. He served in the U.S. Army Air Forces for 33 months, mostly as the waist gunner on a B-29 Superfortress in Guam. He was spared from any major battles, but he did have a birds-eye view of events that captivated the world. His plane was one of the first to fly over Hiroshima and take aerial photos after the atomic bomb was dropped in August 1945. They also flew over the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, where Gen. Douglas MacArthur was poised to sign the agreement that would mark the end of World War II.

Laska still found ways to pursue his passion while serving his country. He played

on a service basketball team in North Carolina before being deployed, and while he was on Guam, he played on the Marianas all-star team.

After the war, Laska was offered a full basketball scholarship to Holy Cross. The 12-man roster that won the NCAA championship his freshman year included three players who would be drafted by pro teams and six players who would go on to enjoy successful coaching careers.

Coach Julian famously insisted he had 10 starters on that '47 team so he spent most of the season playing a platoon system. The first team played the first 10 minutes of each half; the second played the last 10 minutes of each half.

Laska spent his freshman year on the second team, sharing the backcourt with a fellow freshman who would go on to a Hall of Fame career with the Boston Celtics: Bob Cousy. Seventy years later,

Cousy is still one of Laska's closest friends.

During Laska's sophomore year, the Crusaders returned to the NCAA Tournament and finished third, losing to eventual winners Kentucky – the first of Adolph Rupp's four championships with the Wildcats. During their four years at Holy Cross, Laska and Cousy led their teams to an overall record of 99-19.

Laska's college years brought success off the court,

too. While swimming at Coe's Pond one day, mutual friends introduced him to Ruth Willoughby,

a nursing student at Worcester City Hospital. The young couple fell in love, but Laska knew his mother wouldn't approve, since Ruth wasn't Albanian. They ended up eloping in 1948, but they didn't live together at first, since Laska's family didn't know about the marriage.

*Laska spent his freshman year on the second team, sharing the backcourt with a fellow freshman who would go on to a Hall of Fame career with the Boston Celtics: Bob Cousy.*

"It wasn't until my older brother was born in 1949 that my grandmother came around," said Laska-Nixon.

After graduating from Holy Cross in 1950, with a wife and young son to support, Laska spent a couple of years working for an athletic company. His heart was still on the court, however, and when Assumption College, also located in Worcester, offered him the opportunity to coach its men's team, he jumped at the chance.

At first, Laska coached both the Worcester Academy prep team and the Assumption College men's team. It was a daunting task for a new coach and young father, but he made it work.

"I could do both jobs because one played in the afternoon, and one played at night," said Laska.

Laska's impact on New England basketball was immediate. In his first few years

of coaching, he led Assumption to its first winning season since 1934, the Greyhounds received their first NAIA Tournament bid in school history and, in 1954, his academy team won the New England championship.

Recognizing his commitment to excellence, Assumption hired Laska as its athletic director in 1956. Academy coaching duties were handed to Donald "Dee" Rowe, another of Laska's closest

friends, who also ran a popular basketball camp in Worcester with him for more than a decade, but

Laska continued to coach the college team for 11 more years.

During his 15 years as the Greyhounds' head coach, Laska led his teams to a 225-96 overall record, 10 NCAA tournaments and was named New England Coach of the Year on two occasions. He was also Assumption's first head

*During his 15 years as the Greyhounds' head coach, Laska led his teams to a 225-96 overall record, 10 NCAA tournaments and was named New England Coach of the Year on two occasions.*

golf coach, a position he held from 1969-86.

"He coached everything in the old days, whatever sports they had," laughed Laska-Nixon.

In 1967, Laska handed head coaching duties over to Joe O'Brien, an assistant coach and former player, but Laska continued on as AD until his 1986 retirement.

Through his success on the court, Laska made a name for himself beyond Worcester. On several occasions, he took short sabbaticals and coached basketball at the American embassy in Beirut. And, in 1975, he was the business manager for USA National Basketball, traveling throughout Europe with the team as it prepped for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal.

Laska's connections to basketball reached around the world, but it is in New England that his influence is immeasurable. In addition to sitting on an extraordinary number of athletic and civic committees, he oversaw Assumption's transition into becoming an NCAA





Division II athletic program and was a founding father of the NE-10 Conference.

The awards that immortalize Laska's career, including induction into several halls of fame, are too many to list. The greatest honor, however, came in 1975, when the gym at Assumption was renamed The Andrew Laska Gymnasium.

"Despite all of the honors along the way," said Rowe, "Andy never changed. He was revered by all who were privileged to touch his life. Truly a legend."

Laska's thumbprint on collegiate basketball in New England is impossible to overlook, but his greatest influence wasn't in X's and O's. It was his investment in the lives of those around him, including his wife, five kids (Michael, Donna, Diane, Kim and Andrew), former teammates, players and assistant coaches.

"He was a hero, a mentor, a coaching genius," said Rowe. "But he never had an ego or acted like a sports hero. He was always giving and thanking others. Always reaching out to others."

"Andy is the most loyal person I ever met," added Don Lemenager, the team captain during Laska's first year at Assumption. "He was loyal to his players, and the biggest thing he tried to instill in his

players was that loyalty is extremely important. One of his great gifts is that if Andy befriended you, you were a friend forever."

Amazingly, Laska still keeps in touch with teammates from his long ago North High and Holy Cross teams, and in



addition to Cousy and Rowe, some of his best friends are former players like Lemenager.

"Andy was an excellent teacher of the game of basketball," said Lemenager, who still visits Laska almost every day. "But, his greatest gift as a coach was his ability to get the most out of his players. His players respected his deep commitment to the game and to them. He wasn't only interested in them as players, but as young men, and that's why they played so hard for him."

Laska's investment in the lives of his players and their futures resulted in countless players going on to become successful coaches and administrators themselves.

"I wanted to follow in Andy's footsteps," said Lemenager. "I was a basketball coach, and it was because of

what I learned from Andy that I had the skills to become one."

"Andy's legacy in Worcester," said Rowe, "should be that everybody who was privileged to touch his life became better for knowing him. His care and concern for others goes far beyond the game."

At 92 years young, if you ask Laska what he's most proud of, his answer shouldn't surprise you.

"Being a basketball coach," he said. "And, Holy Cross winning the national championship."

Yes, Andy Laska is still passionate about basketball. Long after many of his fellow residents at Life Care Center of Auburn, Massachusetts, are asleep, he stays up to watch NBA and college basketball games. He likes all of the New England teams – the Celtics, Holy Cross, Providence, UCONN – and he follows Georgetown, where his oldest son, Michael, played.

He also keeps up with his beloved Assumption Greyhounds, who still play their home games in the Laska Gym. Laska no longer attends games in person, but the trophy case in the lobby honors him and his influence on the school's rich athletic history, ensuring no one will ever forget that a basketball legend once held court there. 🏀

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



I've written about her and spoken about her ever since I met her in 1991.

Her name is Donna White Sykes, and she was one of the first winners of Life Care's *Whatever It Takes* customer service program. A certified nursing assistant, she is a fixture at Ridgeview Terrace of Life Care in Rutledge, Tennessee. She is a legend, actually.

Her story of putting the concerns of a resident first is truly amazing.

Donna learned one day that a female resident she served was dying of cancer and didn't have long to live. She expressed to Donna that she wished she could talk to a brother before she died, but didn't know where he lived, and hadn't talked to him in years.

Donna got busy and – on her own time with her own money – called the television series *Unsolved Mysteries* about helping her find the brother. Although program officials were interested, they advised it would be six or eight weeks before getting back with her.

Believing her resident didn't have that long to live, Donna contacted the newspaper in the woman's hometown and placed an ad seeking information. She learned from cousins of the woman that there had been

how much her call and the visit meant to him – "to discover my mother after all these years."

Naturally, with a story like that, Donna won the Eastern Division *Whatever It Takes* award.

Why did she do all that? I asked her. "I just put myself in that woman's place, and I asked myself, 'If one of my daughters was dying, what would I give to see her again?' When I asked myself that question, I knew what I had to do."

Donna represents the commitment of thousands of Life Care associates all across the country who share their skills and their compassion with our patients and residents.

Life Care's reputation is not built in Cleveland, Tennessee. It is established one associate at a time taking care of one resident at a time.

That's the story of Life Care Centers of America – from the first center in 1970 to the incorporation of Life Care Centers of America in 1976 to today.

May God bless all those associates who daily give of themselves to those in need. 🙏

*Beecher Hunter*  
BEECHER HUNTER  
President