



Mrs. Mary Ellen Harrison Wolcott

January 14, 1919 - May 7, 2013

Mary Ellen Harrison Wolcott of Asheville died at her home on May 7, 2013, after a period of declining health. She was born January 14, 1919, in Marietta, SC, to Ralph Joseph Harrison and Nannie Mae Morgan Harrison. She was pre-deceased by her husband, William Francis ("Billy") Wolcott Jr., who died in 1999. Her husband Billy was the city engineer for Asheville and served as assistant and associate city manager. She is survived by her children William F. ("Bill") Wolcott III (Debby) of Asheville, and Anne W. Guillet (Bill) of Waynesville; five grandchildren including Kelly G. Stanicek (Jason) of Raleigh, Amy Renn Wolcott of Honolulu, Hawaii, William Merritt Guillet III (Stacie) of Raleigh, Matthew Harrison Guillet (Flavia) of Mooresville and William F. Wolcott IV of San Francisco; and six great-grandchildren including Gretchen Anne Stanicek, Jason Finley Stanicek, Jr., Matthew Blair Stanicek, Peter William Stanicek, William Merritt Guillet IV and Manuel Cruz Guillet. She is also survived by her sister, Dorothy H. Jackson of Weaverville and sister-in-law Ruth W. Barfield of Asheville. She was pre-deceased by her brother, John Ralph Harrison.

A graduate of Lee Edwards High School, Mary Ellen attended Woman's College in Greensboro. After her sophomore year, she returned to Asheville to take a job at the Asheville Times when its offices were on Haywood Street. In high school, she had served as a school correspondent for the Asheville Times, and her payment was 10 cents a column inch and 50 cents for a

picture.

She remembered that when the newspaper moved to its new location on the Battery Park Hill site, she and photographer Malcolm Gamble had to carry their typewriters to the new offices. It was during her early days of newspaper work that she met and married her husband, Billy, a graduate of Virginia Military Institute and officer in the U.S. Army. They were married April 19, 1942 by Rev. C. Grier Davis in a ceremony at Asheville's First Presbyterian Church following the morning worship service and left immediately by train for Florida where he was stationed. When he left for active duty, she returned to Asheville to live with her parents and resume her job at the newspaper.

During her stint on the Times, the afternoon paper, covering local news, she was one of the few women on the staff. Because her husband was in the armed services serving abroad, she was assigned a beat that included stories of local servicemen returning home. Because these stories had to be sent to Washington to be read for sensitive material, when they came back to go into the paper, much of what she had written was blacked out, and she said the stories were much less interesting than they had been when she had originally written them.

She wrote of one serviceman from Enka who kept a diary while he was on Guadalcanal and told of jungle walks where the last man in line in marches would be picked off by the Japanese. When the story was returned, about all it said was, "He's home."

During this time, her husband was serving in the North African and European war theaters. She remembered coming to the newspaper offices on Saturday standing side by side with publisher Robert Bunnelle checking the wires for news of local men killed in action, many of whom she knew, and hoping her husband's name would not be among them. Many times she cried when the

name of someone she knew was on the list.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, she watched the story unfold, line by line, on those wire machines. After a full day at the newspaper, she went to the hospital to work as a Red Cross nurse's aide to help fill a void left by nurses who were caring for wounded servicemen. She and a group of other young service wives formed a "War Wives" group that met once a month to give each other support and encouragement.

She said a high point of her career was interviewing First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman she greatly admired for her views on human rights. She also interviewed Robert Kennedy and numbers of other politicians and dignitaries. She was also in demand as a ghost writer of speeches for politicians and candidates.

When her husband came home from service, she left the newspaper job, had two children and didn't go back to work full time for 15 years, but stayed on call for special assignments. When she returned to work, she eventually became women's editor but also wrote feature stories about the Western North Carolina people she loved. She won many North Carolina press awards for her work, including a statewide Associated Press Exchange Feature award. When she retired from the newspaper in 1992, the Citizen-Times executive editor Larry Pope called her "one of the Citizen-Times' true treasures."

In addition to writing features in her role as women's editor, she lovingly shepherded thousands of brides and engaged couples through the process of publishing their wedding news. Through her years at the newspaper, her knowledge of the people and places of Western North Carolina and her keen interest in politics were an invaluable source for young reporters she

mentored and encouraged.

She was an advocate, both in print and in person, for civil rights, racial equality, women's rights, and tolerance of diverse religions. She was also active in several civic organizations during her life in Asheville, including the Children's Welfare League.

The family is especially grateful for the care and support provided by Memory Care, Hospice, and the many caregivers who gave comfort to Mary Ellen.

The family invites relatives and friends of Mary Ellen to join them in fellowship on Thursday, May 16th, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Morris Funeral Home on Merrimon Avenue. A memorial worship service in celebration of Mary Ellen's life will be held at 11 a.m. on Friday, May 17th, at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church on Merrimon Avenue in Asheville. A private graveside service will be held at Lewis Memorial Park prior to the memorial service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the UNC Asheville Foundation designated for the Mary Ellen and William F. Wolcott, Jr. Family Scholarship Endowment or to a local charity of one's choice.

Cemetery Details

Lewis Memorial Park

415 Beaverdam Road
Asheville, NC 28804

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 17. 11:00 AM (ET)

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
789 Merrimon Avenue
Asheville, NC 28804

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Mary Ellen Harrison Wolcott*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *I am so sorry for your loss. The Bible provides comfort during these difficult times. Revelation 21:3,4 states "And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away". Very soon now, we will never experience losing our loved ones in death. Hope these words give you a new hope.*

Ana - June 01, 2013 at 06:04 PM