

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

January 2023

A FEISTY LITTLE LADY

The Life of Marilyn Baysore Johnston

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

Thanks to my work with the Mason Historical Society starting over a decade ago, I was able to make the acquaintance of Marilyn Johnston. Her small stature and little girl voice belied her strength of personality and character. She always put a smile on my face whenever she was in the room. Many thanks to Noble Johnston for all his recollections.

Marilyn Ann Baysore came into the world on January 30, 1933. Her parents, Lois (nee LaMar) and Tom Baysore, lived in the home across from old St. Susanna. *(This house, which no longer stands, later was purchased by the Catholic Diocese and was home to the nuns who taught at the school.)*

Marilyn was an only child and was the apple of her parents' eyes.

Marilyn was small for her age, but made up for it with spunk. Dr. Frank Batsche, Jr. recalled meeting up with Marilyn on the playground at Central. He was in second grade and she was in first grade. He recalled, "she got mad at me about something, and kicked me in the shin. And she wasn't wearing soft shoes. It hurt!" I asked him what he did then, and he emphatically said, "I took off! If she'd been a boy, I'd have done something about it, but I couldn't hit this tiny girl!" When I recounted this story to her widower, Noble, he said, "I don't doubt it for a minute. She was feisty!"

In high school, Marilyn was very active in the arts: triple trio, class play, minstrel, spring musical, and glee club, among other activities. In her 1951 senior yearbook, she listed



An adorable Marilyn at about the age of three, c. 1936. As an only child, her loving parents doted on her.



Marilyn's 1951 MHS senior photo

her favorite song as "Stardust," pet saying was "Gee Whiz," her weakness: "Shoes," and her ambition: "To make a window blind."

A couple of years after her high school graduation, Marilyn was working at the ticket window of the Dream Theatre on East Main. Besides selling tickets, her other job responsibility was keeping the moviegoers in line. When the kids down front would get rowdy, five-foot-tall, 100 lb. Marilyn would march down the aisle and handily quiet them down. On one particular night in 1954, a young veteran who'd recently returned from his tour of duty in Korea came to see a show. But Noble Johnston found he was more interested in the ticket taker than the movie, and ended up asking Marilyn for a date.

Noble had moved to Mason with his Canadian-born parents in 1940 when he was nine. They lived as tenant farmers on the farm where the old UDF was on Reading Rd. As neighbors, Noble had known Marilyn since he was a kid, although it would be more appropriate to say he had "known of" her. He would walk by her house every day, but was very shy and never spoke to her.

Noble had returned to Mason in 1953, after serving over a year and nine months in the service, which included 10 months in Korea, and eight months on the front line. I would imagine an experience like that would cure anyone of extreme shyness. He asked the pretty ticket taker for a date, and it was kismet. They were married two years later on Feb. 25, 1956.

story continues on next page

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established over 40 years ago, the Society's aim is to promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

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MUSEUM HOURS

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and by appointment.

Marilyn Baysore Johnston, cont.



Noble Johnston

Wedding day for Noble and Marilyn Johnston in the Mason Presbyterian Church was officiated by Rev. Warren Silven.

room was the bathroom. In 1958, the Johnstons built their forever home on S. West St. The land was part of Marilyn's grandfather Alex Baysore's farm, and was then owned by her parents. (The Johnstons' house was severely damaged in the 1974 tornado and had to be rebuilt.)

In 1957, Marilyn and her mother decided to open their own flower arranging business. They worked out of a spare bedroom at Lois and Tom's home on the corner of Third and S. West Streets. Their reputation grew and in 1957 decided to buy out another florist on E. Main. Marilyn wanted to grow the business even more and was looking for a home for a shop. It just so happened that Peoples Bldg. & Loan was constructing a new building on the NE corner of Reading Rd and 2nd Ave. Marilyn was able to rent one of the offices that was located between the bank and the old post office. Agnes Kunzie was her first employee.

A couple of years later, Marilyn and Noble bought the John Rawlings property across 2nd Ave. from Peoples. They tore down the house and hired Bob and Dick Middleton to build what would become the third home of Baysore's Flowers. They moved in three weeks before Christmas in 1960. The flower shop was a family affair as her father, Tom, helped with deliveries during the week, after he retired from Fisher Body, and Noble handled the weekend deliveries.

The newlyweds' first home was at 207 W. Church St. Does the address sound familiar? It should, as it's now the home of the Mason Historical Society. They rented the entire upstairs from Alverta Green, who lived on the first floor with her father, Casper Bedacht. The current medical room at the top of the stairs was their kitchen, and the current bedroom was their living room. At the front of the house, the 'nursery' was their bedroom and the small sewing



Noble Johnston

Marilyn's parents: Tom and Lois Baysore. Tom was a long-time Mason volunteer fireman, and served as fire chief starting in 1959.

But the driving and creative force was always Marilyn. Noble marvels at what a hard worker she was.

In the mid-1980s, Marilyn's parents needed more help at home, so after 19 years at the helm, she decided to sell the flower shop to Betty Tomlinson. Betty had been one of her employees, and was supposed to keep the name "Baysore" for a short time and then sell it back to Marilyn. But that never happened, and that's a good thing. Current owner



Noble Johnston

Noble Johnston driving the Baysore Florist 1936 delivery van in a c. 1984 parade. Tom Baysore rides shotgun along W. Main Street. Noble still owns this classic.

Marilyn (right) with Dee Wilt after a 2010 MHS presentation on the history of Baysore's Flowers.



Cathy Richards Harbison, who bought the flower shop from Betty 20 years ago, has continued growing the iconic Baysore's Flowers in downtown Mason, in the same location that Marilyn and Noble built 62 years ago. The name is Marilyn's legacy.

For the last several decades Marilyn and Noble did a small bit of travel. For many years in February, they would travel down to Florida to visit their good friend Ruth Chesney, who had moved south for her retirement. One time they took a trip to Canada to visit Noble's relatives and made their way east on the way home to see the magnificent Niagara Falls. They also were avid volunteers for the Mason Historical Society. For the most part though, they have lived a very content and quiet life at home. Several times when stopping over for a visit, I would find Marilyn out working on her flower beds in their beautiful yard.

With Marilyn's health declining slowly over the last few years, 91-year-old Noble was devoted to her and was a true super hero. When I last visited with her, I had planned to stay for just a few minutes to share a historical photo of one of her ancestors. But after 1 ½ hours, I was still there, trading stories with the young-at-heart couple. Marilyn still had the twinkle in her eyes that I've always loved. There really was no one quite like her and I'm very proud to have called her my friend. She will be greatly missed.

WESTERN ROW GOLF COURSE MEETS ITS FINAL MATCH

The Ever-changing Face of Mason

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Gone is the 6746-yard, par 72 course that many golf enthusiasts in Mason cut their teeth on. It opened in 1964, and was affectionately referred to as Western “Rolls.” Due to the lack of an irrigation system, which caused the ground to become very hard in the heat of the summer, the ball would roll for miles. Closed in 2008, current site plans include 80,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. Family-owned gourmet grocer Dorothy Lane Market, will anchor the development with their first greater Cincinnati location.



HAPPY 100TH GENEVA!

Celebrating Geneva Gorsuch Mount

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

Christmas Eve, 1922, was an extra special holiday for the Gorsuch family, as that was when (Mary) Geneva was born into the clan. Her parents were Pearl and Effie (nee Murphy), and Geneva joined big sisters, Lucille and Dorothy, at their home in West Chester.

Soon after her high school graduation in 1939, Geneva and some friends decided to catch a movie at the Dream Theatre in Mason. The usher became smitten with the pretty teen and asked her on a date. (*There seems to be a pattern here, if you read the cover story on Marilyn and Noble Johnston. The Dream was apparently a matchmaking haven!*) The usher's name was Vern Mount, and for their first date they went to a Lebanon High School football game. She recalls that they sat in the car so they didn't have to pay. She told him that she had to be home by midnight, and he said “okay, Cinderella.” She says slyly, “we came home pretty fast after that remark.”

But it all seems to have worked out just fine since Geneva and Vern were married the next year. They first lived with Vern's mother, Dorothy Mount. The Mount's home and grocery store were located where the Pleasure Inn is today on E. Main. “They had an outhouse and I went out there once and there was a rat in it!” I said “this is it, I'm going home, so I did.” Soon after, the Mounts rented an apt. from Roscoe and Bertha Case in their house at 318 Reading Rd. (*Logeman Dental is on the site today*). This was a real home for them. Geneva says, “The Case's were great people. They became surrogate grandparents to my kids. Our first child had colic as a baby and she cried all



Geneva and Vern Mount with daughters Christy and Rebecca, c. 1944.

the time.” She laughs and says, “We almost flushed her down the toilet!” And then, just like superheroes swooping in, the Case's would come over and get the baby and take her into their part of the home so Geneva could get some rest. She recalls that Grandma Case was so kind and never once in her life said a bad word about anyone.

The Mounts had been married in the Methodist Church on W. Church St., but began attending the Presbyterian Church on Forest with the Cases. They ended up staying there and their four daughters: Christy, Rebecca, Nickey and Debby were all baptized Presbyterian.

Geneva and Vern ended up moving 12 times in Mason.

“We'd buy a house and fix it up and then sell it. But Vern wouldn't fix it up until we were ready to sell it! And I sort of thought we should fix it up for ourselves and enjoy it...” (I'm sure a lot of people can relate to feeling that way.) It sounds like hard work was in Vern's blood. His father had died young and it fell to Vern and his three brothers to help their mother in the grocery store. When Vern was just a young boy at school, he would run home from recess at Central to sell bread.

At one time, Geneva worked in the Bogan's bakery at 106 W. Main St (now Servatii's). She says with a laugh, “Melva (Bogan) was a character and a half. She said what she thought, and if you didn't like it, too bad.” She went on to say, “I liked her. She was very nice to me.”

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THE SENIOR PEP CLUB

Representing Hometown Pride

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

There always seems to be a story within a story. This article is primarily about Mason's Senior Pep Club, but it is obvious there is also a whole other story about Mason High School's girls' basketball team who won the very first Division 1 State Championship for the school. Since then, there have been others in various sports, but the ride to the top had lots of ups and downs. That story will be for another time. My thanks to Fred Stemmler, Cathy Crotty and Michelle (Munöz) Trenz for sharing their memories of this special and unique time in Mason history. A special thanks to Noble Johnston who provided a treasure trove of detailed information on the Senior Pep Club.

"It was the best of times....", we'll leave it there with the Dickens quote for there is no better way to describe the "Senior Pep Club" experience that began in Mason in 1998. Formed three years prior to the Lady Comets Division I State Championship, Fred Stemmler, Noble & Marilyn Johnston, Gail Bercaw and Flo & Warren Trenery led the charge in driving the Pep Club activities. However, Fred is quick to emphasize that it was a team effort, everybody in the club did something to keep it going. But let's go back to the beginning.

Gerry Lackey came on board with Mason schools in 1991 to teach math. From the beginning he coached a successful team, dominating the FAVC (Fort Ancient Vally Conference) and taking the team to State in 1997. Recognizing the exceptional talent of his players, he wanted to do something to increase attendance to the girls' games. As good as they were, turnout was slim, consisting of mostly family and friends.

According to the publication *Scientific American*, "there is a psychological concept called social facilitation, referring to a change in a person's performance that occurs when others are around compared to when a person is alone. Top-of-the-line athletes tend to perform better with a crowd around than when alone..."¹ Apparently on some level Coach Lackey knew this and felt the need to increase their fan base.

One day, while at an away game Lackey observed a group of senior citizens, sitting together and cheering for their players. The wheels began to turn, and he was sure that they could do the same thing at Mason. Sometime later at a Saturday evening game Lackey ran into Fred Stemmler. He shared the idea with Fred and asked if he would be willing to lead the effort of organizing a Senior Pep Club. He invited Fred to attend a meeting at the school to discuss the idea.

Fred said he attended the meeting with several others, saying he felt his involvement in leading kids parking cars at the tennis tournaments and his attendance at the Lady Comets games made him a viable candidate for the job. That day the coach said, "I'd like to start a pep club."



The Lady Comets of Mason High School, 2000.

Front (L-R): Nicole Stein, Lora Richardson, Susan Lippert, Rachael Minnich, Blair Russell.

Back row: Asst. Coach Angie Edmonds, Racquel Ellis, Jeré Issenmann, Michelle Muñoz, Jenny Imbus, Beth Jones, Stacy Shull, Coach Gerry Lackey.

Looking around the room and not sure how to proceed, Fred said, "if you can make up a flyer, I'll pass it around to the churches and the other seniors I know." So, Fred and the others became the pep club recruiters, and what recruiters they were!

According to Fred there were some mental barriers with the seniors attending the Lady Comets basketball games. "The seniors were kind of afraid of hanging out with the teenagers. They were afraid they'd get run over and things like that, but it wasn't true of course." At the first game there were about a dozen or so people who came from Mason Christian Village. But when word spread about how much fun they were having those people brought friends to the next game who then brought more friends and from that point membership exploded!

Ultimately the Pep Club had well over 200 members on their roster who were all given the royal treatment at the games. Cathy Crotty, Assistant to the Athletic Director, would make sure the seniors received free admission and she would "barricade off a section of seats for the seniors that were easy and convenient to get to." The school even had National Honor Society students at the arena entrance to escort the seniors to their reserved seating.

If all that wasn't enough, Fred would keep tabs on anyone who needed a ride to the games and would make sure someone was there to pick them up. His own "no senior left behind" moment!

In addition to making sure their seating was set, Crotty helped the group order "spirit wear." White polo shirts and sweatshirts announcing: "Mason Lady Comets Basketball – Senior Pep Club" were made available to

Senior Pep Club, cont.

pep club members. A button of the 2000 Division 1 State Championship team was also created to memorialize the win. (These items are on display in the "Comet Room" at the Alverta Green Museum.)

From the beginning Coach Lackey encouraged the girls to reach out to the seniors since they had been so supportive of the team. But soon, Crotty recalls, "it became not a 'reach out' but a love for each other. It became something they wanted to do because they were like their own grandparents. It was a very special relationship."

Player Michelle (Munõz) Trenez recalls, "The Senior Pep Club will always have a special place in my heart. You couldn't help but love them from the moment they began coming to the games. They were the most faithful, supportive, and encouraging group! Through all the ups and downs, you could always count on encouragement from the members of the club."

According to Fred, it became a regular practice after the games for some of the players and seniors to go out together for pizza or ice cream. Trenez reminisces, "One of my favorite memories was when we would eat pizza with them after our weekend games. It was a special time to



Noble Johnston, 91, proudly sporting his "spirit wear" recently at the Museum.

get to know them at a more personal level. We shared pizza over many stories and laughter. They loved and supported us as if we were their own granddaughters. Fast forward to my freshman year at the University of Tennessee, some even travelled to some of my college games! I was amazed by the loyalty and support."

The seniors weren't content with just attending home games, they traveled to away games as well. Fred relates that when the Lady Comets would come into an arena at an away game, "the first thing they would do was to look for our white-shirted Senior Pep Club, to know we were there." Michelle Trenez, remembers, "I can still picture where they sat in our arena with their Senior Pep Club sweatshirts. Their presence added so much to our experience at Mason – they were our special super fans."

The success of the team, earning a spot at the state finals two out of three years, created what *Cincinnati Enquirer* writer, Kevin Aldridge called "Masonmania". The nation's second-ranked girls basketball team was drawing as many as 3,200 a game, more than most boys' teams in the Tristate according to Aldridge. And it is believed by this writer that the Senior Pep Club had much to do with the girls' drive and enthusiasm to win.

The Senior Pep Club followed the Lady Comets to the Regional Championship at Wright State University in 1999 watching them defeat Beavercreek in a 52-46 win, earning them a spot in the Division 1 State Tournament that year. Noble Johnston chartered the bus to Columbus sadly seeing their beloved Lady Comets fall to Pickerington that year in a 46-30 defeat.

In 2000 the Lady Comets had an outstanding season, going undefeated all the way to the Division 1 State Tournament. Once again, the Pep Club made the trek to Columbus via Greyhound and were there to cheer on their team against none other than Pickerington! Parents of the players made sure the seniors had seats on the first floor of the arena and they would run out and get food for them as well. This time Mason beat Pickerington 36-25. They ended the season undefeated 27-0.

As Fred summarizes his memories, he says, "The main impact of the Pep Club was that it enabled a lot of senior citizens to get involved with the school. The school recognized the need, and it opened doors for seniors to interact with the school teenagers. The seniors loved the experience and the relationship that grew between them and the players. It was awesome to see."

The state title win for the Lady Comets was a first for Mason High School. Since then, there have been 11 state championship titles; four in golf, three in cross country, and one each in tennis, lacrosse, soccer and track & field. Girls' sports have netted seven of the 11 titles.

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Senior Pep Club, cont.

At the 10th anniversary of the state win, the team was recognized at the Mason Sports Hall of Fame banquet. Four of the players from that team have been inducted into the Hall of Fame: Michelle (Munöz) Trenz, Jeré (Issenmann) Clark, Beth Jones-Jackson and Rachael Minnich. In addition, Fred Stemmler was recognized in 2012 with The Jack Flaherty Award which recognizes individuals who have shown a great deal of commitment and dedication to Mason High School athletic programs.

The Pep Club disbanded about 2005 but the impact of that exciting adventure on the seniors in Mason lingers to this day. It was more than a state championship win. It was actually a win for the whole community with the seniors being right in the middle of it all. Life is full

THE CHICAGO TRIP

In January, prior to the state championship, the Lady Comets were invited to play in a big national tournament in Chicago called the “Chicagoland Challenge” at Willowbrook High School. The much-anticipated tournament, also referred to as the “Ameritech Shootout,” featured five of the top six teams in the Chicago area.

According to Cathy Crotty they had terrible weather for the trip and got stuck in the hotel with a foot of snow on the streets. Much to their complete surprise (I think her word was “flabbergasted”) in the midst of it all, who showed up in a chartered Greyhound bus with more than 40 fans – the Senior Pep Club! Some had even driven themselves! Crotty recounts, “They all powered through and hung out with the parents and the team. Thankfully the Munozs went out and got pizza for the whole crew. We all ate pizza, and the girls sang to the seniors.”

In the tournament Mason beat No. 3 ranked team Chicago Fenwick in their first game, 59-35. Ultimately, they won the tournament by defeating No. 4 ranked team Hinsdale Central, 46-42. *The Chicago Tribune*, one of the nation’s largest newspapers, not only reported tournament action, but notably ran a feature story on the Mason Senior Pep Club, titled “Fans of Ohio Team are Truly Old School.” The sentiment of the article was that the seniors were not there just because of the team’s success, but for the pure unadorned pride and support of their hometown team and the girls they had grown to love.

After the Chicago Fenwick victory, there was a special moment for coach Lackey as he experienced his 300th win. Fittingly, Livonia Maddox, at 90 one of the oldest pep club members, and a member of Mason’s first girls’ basketball team in the 1920s, presented him the game ball with the assistance of Marilyn Johnston.



Livonia Maddox

of give and take, wins and losses. Sometimes you get something you never expect. For the Senior Pep Club, the give was encouragement, loyalty, and love for the girls. And the girls returned that love in spades. “It was the best of times....”

¹Scientificamerican.com/article/the-olympics-without-fans-is-harming-athletes-performance1/, 07/27/2021.



Jeré Issenmann, Michelle Muñoz, and Beth Jones rejoice after the team’s 52-49 victory over Beavercreek at Wright State. Point Guard Racquel Ellis had converted six of eight free throws in overtime, securing the Lady Comets win and a trip to the state semifinals.

Geneva Gorsuch Mount, cont. from pg. 3

Geneva and Vern celebrated 45 years of marriage before Vern passed away in 1985. They left an amazing legacy, and Geneva gets to enjoy her 11 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren, 10 gg-grandchildren, and 2 ggg-grandchildren. Members of all six generations converged this past Christmas Eve to mark such a momentous birthday with this wonderful, fun-loving woman. I asked her what was her secret to a long life. Her response... “I guess God didn’t want me yet... and the devil doesn’t either.”

Editor note: I think I laughed throughout most of my interview with Geneva. She’s an absolute treasure. Many thanks to her daughter, Debby Mount, and granddaughter, Angie Carter.



Geneva Mount, December 28, 2022

NEXT MONTH:

In the mid to late 1960s, Geneva and Vern Mount bought the “McClung Murder House” at 101 E. Main St. and lived there for about 20 years. “Tune in” next month for Geneva’s recollections from her time living in the “old hotel.”

The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



I hope that all of you had a great Christmas and will have a healthy and enjoyable 2023. Hopefully the Bengals can keep rolling and make another run to the Super Bowl and bring home the Lombardi Trophy. With Joe (Cool) Burrow at quarterback anything is possible.

On Dec. 2 we had an open house in support of the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony by the city of Mason. We had a steady wave of visitors throughout the evening with many touring the museum. It was a great time and a big thanks to everyone who supported the open house!

Thank you to everyone who have already sent in their 2023 membership dues. Memberships are due by the end of January 2023. Just a reminder that new members who signed up after June 2022, your 2023 dues are covered. If you have any questions on your membership, then please call or email us at the museum. I also want to remind you that we have three years' worth of past newsletters on our website for your viewing pleasure!

Jeff Raines and Jason Kaufman have stepped down from the Board in 2023. Thank you both for your support! We welcome Lynn Calvert who has joined the Board as a Trustee.

Have a safe & healthy New Year!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

If you have any thoughts you would like to share regarding Mason history, please email them to: mason.oh.historical@gmail.com

Marilyn Batsche – “What a beautiful, interesting, and well-written article about Frank Batsche. I loved the stories and pictures!”

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THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpts from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman

1815: Justice of the Peace Joseph Scofield signed the original plat (William Mason's lots) on January 18, and it was recorded in the county office on February 9, 1815. Seven of the 16 lots had names marked on the original plan, one of them being Joseph Scofield. Others included James McCowen, Richard Compton, Joseph Coddington, Charles McCowen and S. Phillips. Possibly these men rented or leased the lots already from William Mason and had established a store or two, a tavern or boarding house, a blacksmith shop, the kinds of services needed by travelers on the main road and by the nearby farmers and their families.

1861: Henry Hageman, who had built a sawmill in the Socialville area when he first came to the township in 1828, bought another sawmill on the Muddy Creek in Mason from R.H. Cunningham. Hageman paid \$1,000 for the site on East Street on January 11. Hageman died 18 months after his purchase and his heirs sold the business.

1924: The county health nurse persuaded the members of the Mothers Club in January to provide milk at the Mason school for under-weight children. They did this until the end of the school year and then had to decide whether to sponsor music in the school or the free milk and they opted for the music. (Those poor under-weight children. Well, at least they can sing!)

1937: The heavy amount of snow caused the corporation to hire a man with a horse to hitch to the village's snowplow to clear the streets in January.

1956: On the first Sunday of January Rev. Arlie Carter began his ministry at the First Baptist Church in Mason. He was to stay for almost 12 years before accepting a post with the Seneca Lake Baptist Assembly. Then Rev. Arthur Patterson began his ministry with the church.

2000: Just two months prior to their Division 1 Championship title, Mason High School Lady Comets win the Chicago Challenge/Ameritech Shootout in Chicago, by defeating #4 nationally ranked team, Hinsdale Central, 46-42.

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