

"Memories of Nonny": a woman for all times

(ED. NOTE: The following article was submitted by Eleanor Hicks Murray, daughter-in-law of the late T.M.B. Hicks, or "Hix" as she was affectionately known to area residents. Hix, for years editor at The Dallas Post, died Oct. 3, 1980.

The article was written by request of the family, but Mrs. Murray thought it might be shared with The Dallas Post readers. Eleanor Murray adds that "Though none of us will probably ever win the awards that HIX did, several of her children and grandchildren are doing freelance writing. Hix's oldest daughter, Barbara Hicks Harding, writes a weekly column in Herndon, Va. Her oldest son, Thomas M.B. Hicks III, has published a book on the Hicks family. One granddaughter, Mary Eleanor Sharp, has been published in the Maryland English Teacher's Journal and is currently writing children's stories." Mrs. Murray, who lives in North Carolina, is currently publishing a book of poetry on Western North Carolina - Cherokee County Summer.

BY ELEANOR HICKS MURRAY

I've delayed writing my memories of Nonny, since her death, because I didn't want to admit to myself that she had left us. It seems that she left so many things here for others to do, that she could have done better. Inventing a better way to do things was one of her main joys in life. If there was a better way to write a news story, Nonny found it. But also, if there was a better way for a woman to change a tire, bake an apple pie, make sailor suits for children and grandchildren, or burp a new baby, Nonny found that too. She kept on trying till she found the best way.

She never went into any project half-heartedly so it was no surprise to me, her daughter-in-law, that in 1951 she was named "Outstanding Newspaper Woman of the Year", that in 1969 she received the Keystone Editors award, and that she also won the "Golden Quill" award from the International Association of Weekly Newspapers for her editorial on the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy. Nonny had simply added excellence in writing to the other excellent awards she should have received, during her lifetime, for work well done.

Nonny was born in 1892, at a time when careers for women outside the home were just a dream in some women's minds. But Nonny was born with an excellent mind and she wanted to be a doctor. Nonny would have been a good one, too. Her father, Dr. Martillus Todd, and one brother, also a doctor, were people she envied.

I can imagine there was more than one stormy session when young Mildred Todd confronted her father and asked why she couldn't go to medical school. Remembering her father, who firmly believed that woman's place was in the home, I can hear him telling her that this was a ridiculous idea—that she should prepare herself for marriage and if she was that interested in medicine, good nurses were sorely needed. Nonny took his advice and had nurse's training at John Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. She became an excellent nurse and the country lost an excellent woman doctor.

Nonny married Thomas M.B. Hicks, Jr. in 1916 and she had four children. The Hicks family lived all over the United States—Tom was a department store executive and was transferred frequently. Nonny had no roots in any city those days, but wherever she lived, she put up curtains and transformed the house into a home for Tom and her brood of four. She became an excellent cook and Tom, who the family later called "Gramps" used to say that when she died, Best Cook in The County should be on her tombstone—this tribute annoyed his wife no end.

Wherever she lived, people, recognizing that she had leadership ability, sought her out and asked her to accept offices in community organizations. She worked with many groups, including the Red Cross, the Friends Service, and the Girl Scouts, but her greatest contributions to her community took place after her children were grown.

Motherhood in those days, was Nonny's greatest challenge and she wished to maintain a good home for her four children, nourishing food, and maintain activities in her home which would help her children develop interests and skills. She turned her attention almost entirely to community activities which involved children.

She loved good literature and read aloud very well. She read Dickens to her children and other classics. She read to her husband, when he was tired after a week of business activities.

Never having had a change to take dancing lessons herself, she was determined that her two daughters should have the best dance instruction that the family could afford. She also provided piano lessons for her children, and three out of four of them learned to play well. Her two daughters, when they were grown, became

professional dancing teachers. Later, her oldest daughter, Barbara, founded a nursery school and also became an elementary school teacher. Her daughter, Persis, is a choir director and in recent years, has become a nurse.

Nonny's oldest son, Thomas M.B. Hicks III, became a Lt. Colonel in the US Army and at the height of his army career, was Chief of Public Information for the Army in the Panama Canal Zone. Like Nonny, he was literary and an excellent news writer.

Her youngest son, Warren, had a business career, like his father. Weekends in Packanack, New Jersey, he took an active interest in Little Theater and appeared in many stage productions in that area. All Nonny's children have talent and special skills, and Nonny is responsible for encouraging them to develop those skills.

Nonny did grow old at the end of her life but when I visualize her, she is the young, strong active woman that I knew most of my life. I see her climbing rocky hillsides with her grandchildren in Rickett's Glen. I see her racing her car ahead of son Tom's and beating him home and when he arrived, laughing like crazy. I watch her, home from a day's work at the Dallas Post, standing on the flagstone floor of

her kitchen all evening, caning chairs. I see her in her huge home in Kingston, manning a shovel and throwing coal to the back of that giant furnace—a feat I tried but never mastered.

Pictures of Nonny doing things flash through my mind and I wipe some tears away—for I loved her very much. I thought of myself as her daughter, not her daughter-in-law. I see her pumping her treadle sewing machine with her feet—she scorned electric machines—and turning out slacks and shirts by the dozen for grandsons and granddaughters.

In my next picture, it's winter and Nonny, wearing a shirtwaist dress, is holding a mince pie in her hands lovingly and crimping it just so. Her hair is white and short and naturally curly. Her dark eyes twinkle as after a serious discussion, she says something terribly funny.

Is there a woman alive today who, knowing Nonny, hasn't adopted a lot of her ideas? I was just a kid of 19 when I first met Nonny—and what a child I must have seemed to her. She took a mom's interest in me—my own mother died when I was 17—and started throwing ideas at me. At that time, many of her ideas fell on fallow ground because I came from a family of school teachers

and office secretaries, who were mostly part time homemakers and can opener cooks. I couldn't see where I needed all Nonny's homemaking skills—even though I did.

Nevertheless, I fell in love with her and she quickly interested me in candlelight dinners for families and lovely old antique furniture, Bates white colonial bedspreads and marble topped dressers, Chinese Foo Dogs and fireplace fires and walks through the snow, with cocoa afterward made by Nonny. She introduced me to Nonny's chowder soup, a wonderful concoction with a bone from the butcher and fresh vegetables that will feed a family for a week in hard times, simply by adding more vegetables daily and letting it simmer awhile on the back of the stove.

Nonny knew about natural childbirth, before the term was ever used in books. She sat with me during labor for two of my children and taught me how to relax completely between the pains. She rushed me down the hall to the delivery room when Mary Eleanor was born, she and a student nurse pushing the cart, Nonny hollering at me, "It's coming—don't you dare shut your mouth!"

Being a realist herself, she used to be quite upset with me often because I insisted on avoiding

thinking about some things that were going on in the world. In World War II, she took me to a newsreel and I covered my eyes at the concentration camp scenes, with Nonny saying indignantly, "It isn't happening because you're not watching!"

Probably her greatest disappointment with me, was the time she invited her daughter, Barbara, and me to attend a real "first" in 1944—a series of film slides showing, microscopic of course, conception. (We didn't have X-Rated movies then.) I refused to go with them, saying, "I don't think that married love would seem as romantic if I had to go and look at that!"

The years went on and Nonny got me interested in choir singing, square dancing, puppet making and putting on plays in your own puppet theater, May Day Dances for all the children in the neighborhood, with Nonny providing the ideas and the work for most of the costumes.

"An old fashioned lady costume—no problem," said Nonny. Just make the ruffled pantaloons out of old white ruffled curtains. Later I did it, when I had children of my own.

Nonny played leading parts in "The Women" and "Arsenic and Old Lace." This is when she lived in Kingston. Later, I tried acting in

Packanack Lake Little Theater, because of Nonny's interest in it.

Mostly, Dallas Post readers remember the country part of Nonny's life, when she left Kingston and moved up on the mountain. Doesn't everyone remember Nonny's house in the country, she and Gramps made a lovely home there? I see Nonny's Franklin stove in the kitchen glowing with warmth, always a mother cat with new kittens behind it. I see baskets of vegetables on her porch, the people who loved her had brought—and mince pies cooling on a winter's day. I see a new fire laid by Gramps in the fireplace and the wood, so carefully cut by Gramps, just so, and stored for winter. I see Nonny making chicken and biscuits for a large gang of children and grandchildren, while mothers tried to keep the young ones out from under Nonny's feet.

"Keep those children out of the kitchen until I get the meal ready!", Nonny would say, and we did. Because Nonny had the voice of authority and soon even the smallest children knew that Nonny was the law. She had the voice of authority and she stood seven feet tall, with all of us. She never knew that in height she was actually only five feet and neither did any of the rest of us.

Letter:

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a former Back Mountain resident and I read your paper every week. In fact, I must travel from Wilkes-Barre to Trucksville Pharmacy as its the first place I can get your paper. I follow the stories and activities about Tattersall. I work every day, go home at night, cut the grass or other small chores and believe me its kind of boring, but when I read about all the things that Tattersall gets into, I feel I am a part of it in a little way. My wife saw Mr. Tattersall in church. She said when he appeared all in white, everyone sang louder and prayed deeper. She has been very active in bake sales in the Back Mt. area. She says he pulls up and buys all kinds of things just to donate money. So I read in your paper where someone complained about too much Tattersall in the paper. Well for me and the men I work with, the people I see in the diner where I eat and for all the people who work at different bazaars and bake sales, I hope and we hope that he keeps fighting and protecting us people and that you keep writing about it. Enclosed you will find my check for your paper subscription to come to my house. But I'm a coward like so many others so please withhold my name.

Name withheld



BY DEBBIE Z.

A day with Debbie

She's always late!

I'm late, I'm late, I'm late for a very important deadline. Sorry Mr. Allen, but you'll have to shoot me (again). I know I'm late, and I'm so sorry, but life will continue. (I'm falling behind in everything this week.)

First I'll start with the biggest bummer of the week: I went to the dentist only to find out that I have a cavity. However, the Big D let me truck around Dallas in Mr. Dennon's Trail Duster and it was so fabulous that I forgot all about my cavity. I didn't hit anything, and for the rest of the day I was walking around with a big smile. (Little things like this get me excited.)

But...you might as well not expect my birthdays to be up to date. They're not. Still...Margaret from Humphrey's celebrated last week, as did Mrs. Roth (Sept. 30), and last, but surely not least, there's Mrs. Walters who celebrated back on Sept. 18. To you and anyone else who celebrated, Cheers!

Nuclear Power:

It's a lost cause

By the time you are reading this, the Berwick nuclear power plant will, undoubtedly, have been approved for operation by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The commission will have decided that nuclear power is safe and, although it will not be included in their findings, it will have decided that a lot of money has been invested and must be protected.

The catch to this unspoken part of the decision is that an awful lot more of money is going to be needed and the public will have to pay it. Stockholders will have to pay also, but at least they will get a return on their money. The general public will not.

The dreadful part of the licensing approval by the NRC however, is that the enormous problems of safety still exist. There is still no way to dispose of the awesome wastes these plants produce. Some studies, by scientists opposed to nuclear power, have found that

radiation from just the normal operation of plants is a serious health problem. Industry scientists and the government say not.

Some years back 100,000 U.S. engineers, doctors and scientists formed the Union of Concerned Scientists. They were and are against nuclear power "until such time as it can be proven safe". Included in their union are several Nobel Laureates, yet they are virtually ignored by the news media.

There are many overwhelming hurdles that must be cleared before this type of energy can be accepted. Aside from the most pressing one of safety is the almost certain one of economic disaster. There will be more TMI's and we will all be forced to pay for them. Worse yet, there will be a plant melt-down and only then will the people realize they have been pawns in a game of American roulette.

JOHN ALLEN

Lehman man builds two bomb shelters

50 Years Ago—Friday, Oct. 2, 1931
Nearby sites were viewed as a possible location for a sanitarium and health care facility. According to local physicians, the sanitarium would provide health and maternity care, would be equipped to care for convalescents, and those who chronic disorders. Several hundred acres of land at Harveys Lake was under consideration at this time.

Creswell Drilling Company, Forty Fort, begun drilling a new well for the Dallas-Shavertown Water Company in Shavertown.

Deaths—Simeon Lewis, Pikes Creek.

You could get—Eggs 29 cents doz.; canned corned beef 19 cents can; tuna fish 15 cents can; all flavors preserves 35 cents qt.; pineapple 15 cents; black pepper 10 cents.

40 Years Ago—Friday, Oct. 3, 1941
District air raid wardens and their deputies throughout the Back Mountain were making plans for a "blackout". The telephone company and local fire companies would sound the alarm; interceptor planes from Mitchell Field would repel enemy raiders in this practice drill.

Willard Garey, Lehman contractor, built two bomb shelters, large enough to hold all Lehman residents. Garey also was filling

storage houses with supplies so that food was available in the event of an air raid.

Engaged—Betty Ide to Roy Almerinn; Cora Elston to Robert Jones.

You could get—Pork lions, center cut, 35 cents lb.; ducklings 19 cents lb.; spinach 5 cents lb.; cauliflower 15 cents head; 24 lb. bag flour 85 cents; Waldorf tissue 6 rolls 23 cents; apples \$1.19 bu.

30 Years Ago—Friday, Oct. 5, 1951
Bertrand Shurtleff, former professional football player, author of Colt of the Alcan Road, and many other popular adventure stories spoke at an assembly program at the Dallas Township High School.

Dallas-Franklin and Monroe Township School Boards met to discuss the possibility of a jointure. In other area school news, Kingston Township school directors chose Westmoreland as the name for its senior high school.

Married—Phyllis Jane Pascoe and Glenn H. Brunges; Nancy C. Roche and Warren L. Thomas; Amy Louise Miers and John Andrew Odells.

Deaths—Sarah Baird, Harveys Lake; Samuel D. Davis.

You could get—Spam 12 oz. can 49 cents; Ivory soap 3 medium bars 25 cents; oysters 79 cents pt. can;

fresh scallops 79 cents lb.; bananas 2 lb. 23 cents; sauerkraut 2 lb. 25 cents; ground beef 65 cents lb.; bacon 49 cents lb.

20 Years Ago—Thursday, Oct. 5, 1961

Jack Townsend of Athens, Ohio purchased Dixon's Restaurant. Townsend renamed the restaurant, The Town House.

Dallas rattled with the sound of jack hammers as workmen began ripping up pavement to install natural gas lines. Pennsylvania Gas and Water Company expected to hook businesses and residential consumers to the gas lines before winter.

Married—Donna Ruth Boyle and Gerald Blazik; Jeanette J. McDonald and Joseph Schoonover; Mary Lou Harzdorf and Franklin Mayberry.

Anniversaries—Mr. and Mrs. John M. Cortright, Shavertown, 50 years.

Deaths—John T. Bogdan, Sr., Fernbrook.

You could get—Spare ribs 49 cents lb.; standing rib roast 59 cents lb.; smoked liverwurst 65 cents lb.; sliced bacon 65 cents lb.; sirloin or porterhouse steaks 75 cents lb.; potatoes 50-lb. bag 89 cents; carrots 2 cello. bags 25 cents; apples 43

cents peck.

10 Years Ago—Thursday, Oct. 7, 1971

The John Wilson Murder Trail gets off to a slow start with only one juror chosen on the first day of the trial. Wilson was accused of killing George Wesley at Lake Silkworth in January 1971.

Three Back Mountain homes, those of Dr. and Mrs. C. Warren Koehl, Jr.; Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Kabeschat and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Casper, were included in the annual autumn house tour sponsored by the Jr. League of Wilkes-Barre.

Engaged—Jane L. Chase and Raymond J. Shultz.

Married—Linda L. Parry and John J. Vozniak.

Deaths—Joseph S. Warkomski, Hillside Road; Edith Gibson, Huntsville Road; Peter Kulvinski, Harveys Lake; Clyde Davis, former Dallas resident; Josiah Jenkins, Shavertown.

You could get—Chuck roast 79 cents lb.; ground chuck 89 cents lb.; fresh picnic ham 39 cents lb.; chicken breasts 29 cents lb.; peanut butter 1-lb. 2 oz. jar 59 cents; Jell-o gelatin 5-3 oz. pkg. 49 cents; Kleenex Facial Tissues, 200 2-ply tissues 29 cents.



Letter:

To the Editor:

Hats off to the Dallas Post for taking a courageous stand on a very hot issue.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why nuclear power has so much support. The inherent danger coupled with the astronomical costs should make the whole notion ludicrous. It's like paying extra to have a whole cartridge filled in a game of Russian Roulette.

"Steaming about Salem"

The Dallas Post

An independent newspaper published each Wednesday by Pen-naprint Inc., from 61 Gerald Ave., Dallas, Pa. 18612. Entered as second class matter at the post office, Dallas, Pa., under the act of March 3, 1889.

J. Stephen Buckley, Publisher
Rick Shannon, Associate Publisher
John Allen, Editor

Charlot Denmon, News Editor & Circulation
Sheila Hodges, Production Manager
Mark Moran, Photography

Subscription \$9.00 per year in Pa. \$11.00 out of state. Telephone (717) 675-5211 or 825-6868.
POSTMASTER: If undeliverable, send form 3579 to P.O. Box 366, Dallas, Pa. 18612.