



Mary H. Ashbrook

OCT 9, 1922 - SEP 2, 2013



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Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Tribute Wall	Page 7



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Mary Ashbrook Obituary

Mary Elizabeth Pickering Hemphill Ashbrook, age 90, of Oberlin, died peacefully at home September 2, 2013. She was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, Richard (Dick) Ashbrook, in 2008, and all of her siblings. Mary Ashbrook was born October 9, 1922 in Baltimore, MD to James Hemphill and Charlotte Donaldson, the third of four children. She grew up in the Lawyers Hill Community in Elkridge, MD and graduated from The Bryn Mawr School in Baltimore. While a student at Bryn Mawr College, she participated in The Experiment in International Living, in Morelia, Mexico, learning Spanish and becoming lifelong friends with her host family. She graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1944 with a degree in English Literature, and worked for N.W. Ayer Advertising Agency in Philadelphia and Chicago for seven years. Mary and Dick married in 1949 in Chicago, then moved to Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Indiana before settling in Ohio, where they lived first in Brookpark, then Berea and Oberlin. Beginning with their first house, she and Dick loved living in and fixing up old houses, some century homes. Mary taught her children about the natural world, from plants and trees to mushrooms and moths to rocks and animals, and amazed them with her gift of finding them four-leaved clovers. Mary and Dick loved singing with each other and shared that joy with their children, singing at bedtime, on family road trips to visit cousins and during family reunions. Mary was passionate about understanding cultures different from her own, and dedicated to providing a voice for the disenfranchised. Her daughters folded political literature and stuffed envelopes before they were old enough to understand how Mary's work made the community a better place for them to live. During her and Dick's child-rearing years and frequent moves, Mary said that her work with the League of Women Voters kept her sane, connecting her to the community and forming the foundation for her later political work. Together with Dick, she



Obituary

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volunteered in, and helped organize or lead, organizations that supported voter education and rights, fair housing, and civil rights. During their early years in Berea, they made many friends through the Berea Area Council on Human Relations. As part of the organizations fair housing initiative, Dick and Mary posed as prospective apartment renters to help ensure enforcement of fair housing laws. Her lasagna was a favorite at the family-friendly potluck dinners that opened the annual meetings. Their house in Berea became home not just to their immediate family, but included friends of their daughters and international students from many countries including Taiwan, Ghana, Bulgaria and Japan. Mary and Dick later became foster parents to several young people, and provided a short-term safe haven for teens through Bereas Youth Emergency Aid (YEA), a valuable resource for over 25 years which Mary co-founded with her friend, Judy Riggle. While raising children, Mary earned an M.A. in Education in 1963 from Western Reserve University, then worked as a photographer and reporter for the Berea News Sun. Reporting on city council meetings, Marys interest in local politics deepened. She volunteered in political campaigns at every level, in 1971 serving as campaign manager for a non-partisan slate of candidates in Berea, running on a clean government platform. All but one of the candidates won, bringing open meeting laws and integrity to the City Council. She was elected to Berea City Council in 1978, representing Ward 1 through 1983, when elected Council Member-at-Large. She served as President of Council 1987-1993. Talking with people and helping solve problems was her passion. She said, I have found that if you expect the best from people, very often you receive it. I have had the good fortune of living in this time, in this place. Even when she could not solve the problem through legislation or by connecting people to community services, she was always a supportive listener. In 1990, Mary helped to found the Berea Arts Fest which had its 22nd annual festival this year. She served as Chair or on committees for ten years until moving to Oberlin in 2001. Her talent for drawing and making jewelry were much admired by her family, and she encouraged her childrens creativity in areas as diverse as sewing, jewelry making, pottery, stained glass, watercolor and drawing. Mary enjoyed traveling with family and friends, including Puerto Rico Hawaii, and Mexico. She was a big fan of Mud In Yer Eye, the contra



Obituary

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dance band in which Dick played for many years, and enjoyed bringing them to Kendal for special occasions. A resident of Kendal at Oberlin since 2001, Mary served as KORA Council President, on the Communications, Transportation and Program committees, and volunteered in the Second Harvest warehouse. She was an active participant of the weekly Spanish Table at the Fox and Fell and helped produce the Lorain County League of Women Voters Guide in Spanish. As a member of the Genealogy Interest Group, she researched some of her own ancestors and shared their stories. She continued to be an active member of the NAACP. She served on the Oberlin City Council Charter Review Commission and attended several classes at Oberlin College, especially enjoying her Japanese studies. Mary was very proud of all of her daughters and their families, and enjoyed many annual family reunions with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She shared many common passions with different family members: love of different cultures, foreign languages and travel; gardening; working for a better world; singing and music; cooking; playing Scrabble; and more. Survivors include six daughters: Anne Fitzpatrick (Tom), Albuquerque, NM; Connie Ashbrook (Martha Landowne), Portland, OR; Peggy Ashbrook (Darryl Franois), Alexandria, VA; Janet Ashbrook (John Dunn), Avon Lake, OH; Ellen Ashbrook (Ann Adams), Tajiique, NM; and Nico Ashe (Andrew Poltzer), Albuquerque, NM; eight grandchildren: Max Fitzpatrick (Yahima Hernandez) and Laura Fitzpatrick (Rahul Sharma); Kamoya, Asasi and Amadi Franois-Ashbrook; Ben Smith, and Alexander and Benjamin Poltzer; two great-grandchildren: Uma and Iyla Sharma; sister-in-law Gail Terry; her Mexican family, Lola Chavez and children; and many wonderful nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friends. A celebration of Marys life will be 2pm Sunday, September 29, 2013 at Kendal Auditorium in Oberlin, Ohio. Memorial contributions may be made to the following organizations that support Marys ideals of education and opportunity for all: American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102; League of Women Voters, 83 S. Cedar St., Oberlin, OH 44074; or Planned Parenthood, 434 West 33rd St., New York, NY 10001. Dicken Funeral Home and Cremation Service, Elyria, handled arrangements. For online condolences, visit www.dickenfuneralhome.com



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To send flowers
to the family or plant a tree
in memory of Mary H. Ashbrook, please visit our floral store.

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Tribute Wall

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KA

Kim Ammeter posted:

Sending my love and sympathies to all the "Ashbrooke Girls" - I have so many happy memories of time spent at your home and around your kitchen table. My sincere condolences, Kim Katsanis Ammeter

September 14 at 8:00 PM

HF

Harish Sharma And Family posted:

Our deep condolences to Mary's extended family. We wish for a time of celebration of her life and true meaning for everyone. It was our privilege to have known her and met her whenever she was here in Albuquerque. She was so gentle and kind to everyone. We very kindly remember her telling us about the special birthday that our grand daughter Uma shared with her ancestor almost a century back. Mary was really an amazing person. We shall cherish the little time that we spent with her.

September 12 at 8:00 PM

KL

Karyl Lee posted:

My condolences to Mary's extended family and a wish for a time of celebration of her life and meaning for you all. It was my privilege to spend some time with her at Kendal and to witness her gentle and strong spirit.

September 7 at 8:00 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Mary by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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