

A Page From the Past – A Conversation With Hope Powell

By Sue Ressler – December 2021

I loved chatting with Hope about her 90 years. No hesitation here; I asked/she answered. Hope is quite the conversationalist and her distinctive laugh made me smile through the entire interview.

Hope was born in Baltimore County, Maryland and lived most of her life in that area. Growing up as an only child, she once asked her parents for a baby brother or sister, but “only for rainy days”. On other days she planned to keep the baby tucked away in a bureau drawer. In those days she lived in a “go-between” home where her parents welcomed and cared for various acquaintances and relatives.

As a kid she was a Campfire Girl and remembers camping trips to the Severn River. She loved going to the movies for 10 cents, always wanting to see “The Mark of Zorro”. She also enjoyed “Lux Theatre” and “Green Hornet” on the radio. I have to admit, they were before MY time. Her mom attended a Presbyterian Church, her dad went to a Methodist Church, but it was her elderly neighbor who encouraged her to go with him to his Lutheran Church because he sang in the choir and he thought she would enjoy that. So, as a little girl he would carry her on his shoulders to church every Sunday.

Of course, Hope had pets, probably to take the place of a brother or sister. She had a BLACK cat she named oddly enough – Snowball! The cat was eager to ride in her baby doll carriage snuggled under a blanket, never even trying to escape. Equally as well-trained was her pet rooster (no name given) who was quite at home in her bicycle basket. Maybe she was a “pet whisperer” – in-training.

Her first job as a teenager was as a soda jerk making milkshakes “the way she liked them”...lots of ice cream, not much milk. I was fascinated to learn that she went to school where there was no Grade 8. Kids went from 7th Grade to 9th and graduated from high school at age 16 or 17. She admitted she was no good at math but loved English, Science, and Biology. And of course, she walked A MILE to the streetcar to take her to school, as every child did back in the day!

Upon graduation, she put in applications to the FBI and several other local businesses. She quickly was hired by USF&G Insurance where they referred to her as “the baby” because she was so young. Soon after she was offered a job by the phone company which she immediately accepted because her mom worked there. Her career spanned 30 years working as a receptionist, teller and preparer of paychecks for all of the phone company employees in Baltimore County and Baltimore City, D.C., Virginia, and the Eastern Shore!

Hope married at age 19 and adopted Karen and then son Danny. She was married for 35 years. She was very active in Eastern Star, serving as Worthy Matron and chairing many of its committees. As an adult, Hope taught Sunday School, Bible School, served on Church Council and was active in the women’s group that reached out to serve their community.

Hope spent many winters in Florida as a “snowbird” taking many classes and learning new skills. She loved jewelry making, hangings, and Swedish weaving which is done on monk cloth and involves making a pattern by counting threads in the cloth. Some of her pieces took at least 50 hours to complete.

When she moved to our area to be closer to her kids and their families, she was church shopping and mentioned it while chatting with her lawn care guy. He gave her a name and phone number of another client who was very happy at her church and thought this lady and Hope might be able to connect. Hope called the number, but the lady who answered was not the lady she expected to talk to. But it all worked out...it was our own Sandy Shelley and she was more than happy to bring Hope to church and help her get acquainted. Thank you Sandy! We are all blessed by Hope’s membership.

There you have it! Hope Powell the mini-series. She is a force to be reckoned with, having struggled through two bouts of breast cancer, a painful back surgery, and most recently a heart attack. Enough already! We all wish you a very, very happy and healthy **90th** year and many more.

(Continued on back of page)