



Maryann Gowen Finn

December 14, 1923 - November 7, 2017

Maryann Gowen Finn died on Tuesday, November 7 under hospice care in Benicia after a short illness. She was 93. Maryann will be missed by her family and friends as the lively, funny and loving person she was. She told stories with an Irish twinkle in her eye, was an exceptional cook, and enjoyed embroidery and sewing, her specialties being last-minute Halloween costumes and Saint Patrick's Day corned beef and cabbage.

Maryann was generous and forgiving and had a ferocious interest in family. Phone conversations with grandchildren could run 45 minutes and include suggestions for dinner or tips on removing mysterious stains from a favorite shirt. She was always up for jigsaw puzzles or cribbage, and quick to slip \$100 in a pocket for help with transmission repairs or a celebratory night out. She was especially good with babies. Characteristically, Maryann stayed sharp and fearless to the last moment's of her life.

Maryann's parents met in 1920 in North Fork, California where her mother, widowed by the Spanish Influenza Epidemic, worked as a switchboard operator, and her father, a recent Cal graduate, began his career in forestry in the Sierra National Forest. Maryann was born in Placerville California on December 14, 1923. There, her dad worked in the El Dorado National Forest with the US Forest Service. Maryann spent her early childhood in and around various National Forests, including Lassen and Trinity in Susanville and Weaverville, respectively.

In 1930, Maryann moved with her family to Berkeley, where her dad worked as head of fire investigations at the Forest Experiment Station on the UC campus. The family lived off Solano Avenue near the Oaks Movie Theater; Maryann forever after considered herself a Berkeleyan. In 1934 Maryann's father was transferred to Washington, D.C. on special assignment related to the WPA. Maryann, her half-brother Arthur, and her parents lived in the diverse, historic Columbia Heights neighborhood near Howard University until the family returned to Berkeley.

Maryann attended Garfield Junior High, graduated from Berkeley High and trained at

Heald's Business College. She was hired at the Richmond Shipyards as a Rosie the Riveter in 1941; that same year, she met her life's love, even if he was an Albany High grad, Robert Finn.

Bob and Maryann married in 1945 after Bob's return from the South Pacific, where he served in the Navy. As Bob finished his military service and subsequently earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees, the couple lived in San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Aptos. When Bob was hired by Richmond Unified School District in the 50's, they returned to the Bay Area buying a home in Pinole. They lived there for 60 years, raising three daughters.

In the late 60's Maryann returned to school to earn a BA in Anthropology (ΦBK), a Masters in Library Science and a teaching credential, all from UC Berkeley. Always a fair-minded person, she relished observing first hand on-campus protests during this turbulent period. Later she worked as a high school librarian at Harry Ells and Richmond High schools before retiring in 1988 with Bob to care for their youngest grandchildren for the next 12 years. In retirement, Bob and Maryann also enjoyed traveling Europe, visiting four French-American grandchildren, and relaxing in the Sierra Foothills with extended family in the home Maryann's parents built not far from where they had originally met. After Bob's death in 2008, Maryann, with strength and grace, lived on independently until 2015 when she moved to Brookdale Vallejo Hills to be closer to her family in Benicia.

She is survived by her three daughters, Kathleen Choiset of Neuilly-sur-Seine, France; Laurel Freeman of Madera, California; and Teresa Finn (Ron Kane) of Benicia, as well as seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The hole in our hearts and our days will be difficult to fill. We are grateful for the extraordinary care Maryann and her family received from Kaiser Vallejo Hospice and Benicia Loving Care Home. Donations in her memory can be directed to the Solano County Ombudsman Program, c/o Area Agency on Aging, 400 Contra Costa Street, Vallejo, CA 94590

Comments



“ We were so sorry to hear of Maryann's passing. We were so lucky to have been Maryann and Bob's neighbors since 1984! We all enjoyed the stories about their past and their trips. Our boys grew up with them as grandparent like, and enjoyed the shop tips and knowledge they both had to share. I loved her wonderful laugh and the hugs we shared, especially on our mutual birthday! Our family sends the families sympathy and hugs. One of my favorite memories is when they danced at our oldest son's wedding, and now they will dance together again

Dana Morgan - November 25, 2017 at 01:03 PM



“ Mary Ann was such a delightful colleague and a terrific librarian. She was so helpful to me and my American Government students at Harry Ells High. We both loved travel, especially to France, and enjoyed sharing information and experiences. I absolutely remember that twinkle in her eye. My Condolences to her family and friends. She was a very special woman.
Sincerely, Barbara Quein

Barbara Quein - November 16, 2017 at 09:46 PM



“ As a beginning teacher at Harry Ells High Mary Ann helped me in so many ways to navigate the world of teaching. She was always there to help and showed great care for all of our students. Mary Ann was the first librarian in the District to work to ensure that our language minority students had materials to read in their primary language. I already miss her joyful attitude to life. She was one of a kind!

Toni Oklan-Arko - November 16, 2017 at 11:51 AM



“ Toni Oklan-Arko lit a candle in memory of Maryann Gowen Finn



Toni Oklan-Arko - November 16, 2017 at 11:47 AM



“ I worked in the library with Maryann Finn and it was a delightful time. We sometimes froze in the winter but she warmed us with her spirit and enthusiasm. My sympathy to her family.

Marlyn Kauk - November 13, 2017 at 05:16 PM



“ What a lovely and loving tribute to Maryann! I enjoyed many conversations with her over the years, but especially recall her teaching me about Depression-era glass (how it needs to be set out in the sun periodically to recapture its pink color!) and her giving me a beautiful cake stand from her own collection. I use it often and treasure it. She and I also shared a love of dollhouses, and I hope that her own sweet dollhouse will become an heirloom for her great-grandchildren one day. You all have our whole family's deepest sympathy at the passing of such a fine woman, and we know you will miss her presence in your lives tremendously.

love, Kathryn Reiss, Tom Strychacz and the Strychacz-Reiss family

Kathryn Reiss - November 10, 2017 at 09:38 PM



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Will - November 10, 2017 at 12:54 PM