



Mildred Schappals

January 18, 1918 - June 9, 2021

Mildred Geraldine (“Gerry”) Schappals, age 103, passed away peacefully on June 9, 2021 at The Huntington At Nashua. She was born in Worcester, MA on January 18, 1918, daughter of the late Daniel M. and Honorah (Harrington) Lyons. She was preceded in death by her husband, Everett A. “Gus” Schappals, her parents, her brothers Joseph of Alhambra, CA and Paul of Brewster, MA and a sister, Helen Downing of S. Yarmouth, MA and Sarasota, FL.

Ever the tough survivor, at the age of ten months, she survived a nearly fatal bout of the 1918 flu, a pandemic that claimed fifty million lives worldwide. She claimed that the illness bestowed a steel immunity. This was probably true because after her recovery she was never ill with the seasonal flu viruses that affected everyone else, never had a headache or even a cold. She was educated in Worcester public schools where she shook hands with Civil War vets on Memorial Day activities, graduated from Worcester Commerce High School in three and one half years and received a Bachelor of Science from Fitchburg State College in 1939.

In 1943, while teaching eighth grade in Bowie MD, she met the love of her life: a dashing Navy officer (and, to her parents’ delight, a New Englander, a good cribbage player and a Catholic to boot, all of which compensated for the fact he wasn’t Irish) Everett A. “Gus” Schappals of Danbury, CT. They married in 1945 and were stationed in various places, including Guam (where she opened the island’s first nursery school), Hawaii and Washington DC, managing to have two daughters along the way. In 1960, Mr. Schappals retired from the military and accepted an engineering position with Sanders Associates in Nashua.

Within months of settling in Nashua, Mrs. Schappals opened the city’s first book store, “The Book Shelf” on West Pearl Street. In addition to a lively local trade, the store attracted a large clientele from Massachusetts where books like “Tropic of Cancer” by Henry Miller were banned.

She missed teaching though, so she sold the store and taught fifth and sixth grade at Fairgrounds Elementary and Broad Street Elementary in Nashua. (Hopefully, her former students can still recite all the Presidents in the correct order). After obtaining a Master's degree from Rivier College (now Rivier University), she became the first principal at New Searles Elementary in Nashua. She then obtained a C.A.G.S. (Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies) from Northeastern University. She concluded her career as a Supervisor of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction in the Nashua Public Schools, a position she held for several years until retiring in 1981.

Mrs. Schappals was a member of the Retired Teachers Association of N.H., a past board member of various charities including Community Council of Nashua and Girls, Inc. of Nashua. For many years, she was a communicant of Immaculate Conception parish in Nashua. She moved to The Huntington At Nashua in 2004, one the first arrivals in the independent living quarters.

During the summer of 2020, she became a media celebrity after an interview with CNN when she was featured as a survivor of both the 1918 flu and the Covid-19 virus. This notoriety led to further interviews for The Washington Post which were also carried in USA today, The Dallas Morning News among others as well as TV shows, "Inside Edition" and "The Doctors". The Boston Bruins featured her in an end-of-season video honoring New England survivors of the Covid-19 virus. She was shown wearing a Stanley Cup hat and waving a Bruins banner. Her comment about the hat was, "Who is Stanley?"

Perhaps the crowning honor of this celebrity was receiving the Keys to the City of Worcester from His Honor Joseph Petty, the Mayor of Worcester.

Mrs. Schappals is survived by her two daughters, Jade Walsh of Jackson Hole, WY and Julia Schappals (Harris) of Bedford, NH and their spouses. Survivors also include nephew Paul H. Lyons, Jr of Cape Cod, niece Maureen Knapp of Fairfax, VA as well as 3 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren and numerous great grand nieces and nephews.

Gerry Schappals will be remembered for her fine taste in wine, a witty sense of humor, fantastic piano playing (everything from jazz to Chopin), her love of a good book and her series of pampered pet dogs, none of which was a decent watchdog. She attributed her longevity to "Mother Nature thought I died in 1918."

In lieu of flowers, and in keeping with Gerry's love for animals, please consider donations to The Live And Let Live Farm (20 Paradise Lane, Chichester, NH 03258); the New Hampshire Animal Rescue League (545 NH-101, Bedford NH, 03110) or the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (Attn. Memorial Giving, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105).

A memorial service for Gerry will be held at 11AM on August 17 at the Immaculate Conception Church, 216 East Dunstable Road in Nashua. Her many friends are welcome.

Comments



“ Nana,
I will always remember:
*Dancing in your living room while you lit it up with an impromptu piano concert
*Endless hours exploring all the cabinets, drawers and secret hiding places in your house on Woodland Dr.
*my heart skipping a beat as I entered your bathroom and saw all your makeup covering the counter and spilling out of drawers...and knowing I was allowed to play with it.
*hearing you correct my mom's grammar :)
*hearing funny stories about your students
*playing restaurant
*you and Helen teaching me to play Bridge
*night swimming
*eating spaghetti at the table with you out of the bowls with the little pink flowers
*brain teasers at that same table
*And more recently enjoying a glass of wine with you on the porch at the cape while you told us stories of our ancestors and shared your wisdom for a life well lived. And, of course, kept us laughing with your trademark sense of humor.

You lived your life on your own terms and you are an inspiration to me. I am so blessed to be your granddaughter. I love you!
Eileen

Eileen Hopper - August 12 at 12:01 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Eileen Hopper - August 11 at 06:05 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Jade Walsh - August 06 at 07:23 PM



“ Gerry was the lovely lady who hired and inspired me to be the best that I could be! She was a wonderful role model for all of us who were teachers during her tenure in the Nashua public schools. You are all in my thoughts and prayers for wonderful memories and peace.

Barbara Reilly, Special Educator, Nashua School System

Barbara Reilly - July 08 at 09:54 AM



“ We have been so fortunate to have know such a spectacular women. Gerri was such an inspiration to all of us here at The Huntingtin At Nashua. We will truly miss her warm heart and keen sense of humor. She will be missed greatly by all.

Our deepest sympathy and condolences to all of you during this very difficult time.

Love, Your Huntington Family.



Lisa Valcourt - June 25 at 12:52 PM



“ I am saddened to hear of Mrs. Schappals passing. She was my very first mentor and a positive force during my first years teaching. I remember her visits to my classroom and her love for children. She is an example of a life well lived.

Luane Genest - June 20 at 11:07 PM



“ To Julie and Family, I was so sorry to read about your mom's passing. She was such an inspiration during my teaching time especially when I taught at Temple Street School and she would make her visits. She was always interested in the kids and their progress. Gerry's pleasant and professional demeanor will be remembered by me. My condolences. Jean Nichols

Jean Nichols - June 20 at 02:19 PM



“ I wish I had know Gerry, and yet I think I do through her daughter Jade, one of my most favorite people. Gerry lives on in Jade through her zest for life, great compassion, and her humor.

Louisa Sandvig - June 19 at 07:27 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to the family. I was a student at New Searles when she was there. I loved her.

Virginia Hopkins - June 19 at 06:13 PM



“ My condolences to Mrs. Schappal's family - she was quite a wonderful lady! I still think of her in Jade's under-construction kitchen (and the very cold garage) hammering out campaign signs! A strong, determined woman who put the rest of us to shame with her stamina. I hope the memories of the times you shared bring you comfort.

Kathy Vassar - June 19 at 06:11 PM



“ Mike & Judy Keane lit a candle in memory of Mildred Schappals



Mike & Judy Keane - June 18 at 07:46 PM



“ What a wonderful gift Gerry made by being a symbol of hope during the darkest hours of the pandemic. She was an inspiration.

Susan Cunningham - June 21 at 12:05 PM



“ I met Gerry through Nashua College Club and worked with her on several events. What a delightful person - great sense of humor, spirit of adventure, and fun. She and Nikki were like a comedy team. Nashua education was better for the leadership of both..

Ann Ackerman

Ann T Ackerman - June 24 at 11:14 PM