

Mary Jean Clephas: A Life of Giving Well Planned

BY ELLEN MCKNIGHT

Mary Jean Clephas passed away in 2004 in Las Vegas after a full and adventurous life. Notified just recently that the Ursuline Sisters were listed as a beneficiary in her estate plans, her nephew, Marty Reinhart, sent photos and emailed memories that capture the essence of her free spirit. A native of Louisville, Kentucky, Mary Jean was Ursuline-influenced early in life. Her sister, Dorothy, was Ursuline Sister Gervase.

On a recent phone call Marty explained, “My Aunt Mary Jean’s life was one of independence, service and leadership. She was very successful while at the same time being versatile and entrepreneurial. She never married. She traveled to 30 plus countries and shared her experiences to the delight of all of us.”

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The photo montage on the next page shows just how varied her career and interests were. She was an airplane mechanic at Bowman Field in Louisville when WWII began; served in the military as a WAVE and worked at a hospital in San Diego to assist in the rehabilitation of injured troops; and served in the Women’s Ambulance and Defense Corps of America (WADC). After her military duties ended she became a real estate agent, started her own company and built her own house. Later she became a certified CPA.

A life well lived and well planned seems like an understatement.



Mary Jean’s First Communion, 1933

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1. Mary Jean, back left as an aircraft mechanic at Bowman Field, Louisville
2. Clephas family, front from left: Mary Jean, Dorothy (Sister Gervase)
3. U.S. Navy, 1945
4. Early businesswoman days
5. Digging the trench for her home's sewer lines

