

Mary, Mary, (almost never) contrary

By Kathy Tretter
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I think most would agree, to know Mary C. Lange is to love Mary C. Lange.

A fixture in the community for many years, a champion of important causes and community efforts, a gracious lady devoted to family and friends, Mary can now add another accolade to the many she has accumulated over time – 2026 Ferdinand Heimatfest Ambassador!

Mary C. was chosen for this honor for a variety of reasons.

Any family who has faced the Big C and come through it with positive results on the other end can thank her as the impetus behind the Lange Fuhs Cancer Center at Deaconess Memorial. For her, launching a state-of-the art cancer treatment facility was personal. Both parents, four brothers and a niece all dealt with cancer diagnoses and together with her husband, the late Clem Lange, they decided to do something about it. The result is one of the finest cancer treatment centers in the Midwest.

That being said, there are many financially able folks who would not have invested in something to improve the lives of others, but that's just Mary. She's a woman who cares and because she is able she makes things happen.

Ferdinand's Christmas Pyramid became a reality thanks to her generosity.

Ditto for St. Henry's new Community Center, just dedi-

cated on May 31.

The fountain in Holland Park?

That was Mary.

The new Forest Park football stadium?

Mary.

The list of her philanthropies is too long to fit in one article, suffice to say her middle name could be Generous, or maybe Kind. Gracious would work as well.

That's not the life she was born to, however.

Mary Catherine Fuhs arrived February 9, 1941, the child of Urban and Collette (Burger) Fuhs – baby number eight of nine. She was walking at nine months, but at age five she suffered an appendix attack that became infected, after which she had to relearn to walk.

To this day Mary still has the cards and well wishes sent for her recovery. An avid scrapbooker, she preserves these memories for posterity in beautifully designed albums.

Mary met the love of her life, Clem Lange Jr., the summer after her freshman year of high school, but at the time didn't really give the cute guy with the shy smile that much of a thought.

Her aunt, Sister Theresa Louise (the former Olivia Burger) was a nun at St. Mary of the Woods which at the time had a high school as well as a college. Sister convinced Mary's parents to send her there where she waited on tables in lieu of tuition.

She did not want to go back her sophomore year and cried all the way to Terre Haute so her parents transferred her to Jasper High School for her junior and senior years.

But back to that cute guy with the shy smile.

Mary's sister Dorothy was dating Clem's older brother Ray and that summer Mr. Fuhs wanted to drain their lake,

so Ray and Clem came to seine the fish.

"I don't think I paid too much attention to him," Mary recalls, but he definitely paid attention to this adorable brunette whose Dad he was helping.

They had their first date her sophomore year. She was almost 16 at the time and Clem asked Dorothy if she thought he had a chance with her sister.

So what did they do on this auspicious occasion?

Clem took Mary to a neighbor's Solemn Communion Party.

Clem left for the Army on February 3, 1958 and after training reported for duty in Germany. An amazingly intelligent man, the military wanted to keep him, offering promotions and career advancement but he wanted to get back home to his Mary and turned the opportunities down.

He was discharged exactly two years later on February 3, 1960 and had in his pocket a diamond engagement and wedding ring.

He was five years her senior but had been willing to wait. Clem's intentions were obvious when, for her high school graduation he gifted her with a cedar hope chest.

Now he was back from service with rings burning a hole in his pocket. On February 9 the newly reunited couple went to the movies and upon their return, parked in the Burgers' barnyard.

Mary wrote in her scrapbook: "That is when Clem asked me to marry him. Of course, I said "Yes." ... The next day Clem and I got together. I told him that he had to officially ask me again, this time while he was kneeling on one leg. This was done!! Clem and I were engaged!!"

They set their wedding date for October 6, 1960 at the 7:45 a.m. Children's Mass in Precious Blood Catholic Church.

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