

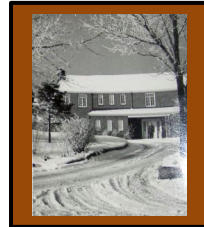
Longtime Pacifican eases into 90 with dry humor, good music and a whole lotta friends

An interview-biography with Mary Dougherty

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An interview-biography with **Mary Dougherty**

Written by Jean Bartlett

March 31, 2026



There were three parties for Pacifican Mary Dougherty in honor of her 90th birthday, on Sunday, March 1: one was at her church, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church on Terra Nova Blvd.; one was at her favorite music hangout, the Chit-Chat Café on Manor; and one was at the event space, Studio 41, in the Park Mall Shopping Center. The latter party was thrown by her nephews who flew in from out of state to celebrate their beloved aunt.

←Mary and her sister Jane, New Philadelphia, OH, circa 1938-1939.

"It was really a lovely day," Mary stated. "Though I have to admit, I was a little tired at the end of it. I usually go out for two hours to hear music at the Chit-Chat and then I come home and rest. But I wouldn't have changed a thing!"

"Well, I would have maybe changed one thing," Mary deadpanned. "I was surprised Willie Nelson wasn't there. Of course he has gotten old." Willie is three years older than Mary.

"I have seen Willie in concert a few times," Mary continued. "And I do love quoting this song title of his,

'Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die.' That's a pretty great song with a nice beat. My number one pick. Some people give me a peculiar look when I say that phrase, just as a matter of conversation. But then, I am reminded of my mother's favorite quote, 'Everyone is a little bit peculiar.' That along with, 'No, but.' My sisters and I decided our mother must have been a little bit peculiar to make that statement so often and with such certainty." Mary offered an almost imperceptible smile while her interviewer laughed with gusto.

* * *

Mary Jean Dougherty was born on March 1, 1936, in New Philadelphia, Tuscarawas County, Ohio, to Dr. Clark "Mac" McReight Dougherty and Olivia French (Blinn) Dougherty. Mary is the second of their four daughters: Olivia Jane, Mary Jean, Ruth Joyce and Elizabeth Joan.

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"We called my oldest sister, Jane, and she died more than 20 years ago. I do miss her. We were such good friends." (Olivia Jane Dougherty Wallace, February 19, 1934 – September 28, 2003.)

"My nickname was Mez. From a story I heard, that nickname came about because my sister Jane and my sister Ruth Joyce could not say 'Mary Jean.' So, they called me, Mezy, and then it got shortened to Mez. Some of my family members still call me that and that was my nickname in grade school and high school.

"Ruth Joyce is two years younger than I am and Elizabeth, who also goes by 'Libby' or 'Lib,' is six years younger than I am. Both my younger sisters, I am happy to report, are still going strong.

"My parents married in Bellefontaine, Ohio, the summer of 1931, in July. My father was a surgeon with the Grasslands Hospital at Valhalla, New York. Both were born in Ohio. My dad was born on May 10, 1904, in Antioch, and he died in July of 1992 at age 88. My mom was born in 1908. She was from Hardin, Ohio. She died in December of 2001 at age 93. They are both buried in New Philadelphia.

"How did my parents meet? My dad went to medical school at the University of Cincinnati, so he did his internship at Bethesda Hospital. My mother, who was a nurse, went to the Bethesda Hospital School of Nursing. I'm sure they met there. But that's not the story my father told as to how they met. He used to say that he saw my mother and grandmother walking together somewhere, and he thought my mom was quite good looking. He also thought her mother was quite good looking for her age and so that decided it for him, because he knew what my mother would look like when she got older. My mother never relayed her version of the story as to exactly how they met. But in her nursing school years, she apparently was too busy climbing out the window to remember all the details.

"What do I mean by that? I found out later in life that my mother must have been a wild woman! I went to the same nursing school that she had gone to and one of her classmates was still there. Her old classmate told me they used to have to let my mother in after hours. But where was she! Also, my mother and my dad moved to New York while he was doing his residency at Grasslands Hospital. They were engaged but they were not married yet. I think she had her roommate go with her as a chaperone, or maybe her parents. But she was a wild woman for those times!

"When my mother was at Bethesda Nursing School, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the nursing students also learned music and painting. That was part of their nursing education. That was not true when I was in nursing school, which I am not ungrateful about."



Members of the Students' Glee Club, Bethesda Hospital, 1927. Mary's mom, Olivia Blinn, is second row, second in.

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"My mother not only married a doctor, but she was the daughter of a doctor. Her parents were Mary (Ferguson) and Dr. John Charles Blinn. How they met I think is very interesting. My maternal grandmother, Mary Ferguson, was the daughter of Rev. William and Frances Ferguson. In April of 1899, Mary left the family home in Harrison, Ohio, to travel with her ailing brother to Socorro, New Mexico."

Willie had tuberculosis, or as it was known then, consumption. New Mexico, with its drier climate, abundant sunshine and high altitude was considered ideal for keeping this respiratory disease at bay. When Mary was in Socorro, she met Dr. Blinn, originally of Ohio. Dr. Blinn had moved to Socorro earlier to help his wife who also suffered from consumption. Sadly, Dr. Blinn's wife died from this highly virulent disease.

Following his wife's death, the widower, with his two young daughters, remained in Socorro, treating the many, many patients "consumed" by the disease's complications: severe cough and rapid decline in appetite and weight. By the turn of the century, consumption was killing 450 Americans daily. As to Mary's brother Willie, he succumbed to the disease three weeks after he and his sister arrived.

As reported in The Union County Journal, Marysville, OH, June of 1899: *"Dr. Blinn was called to treat Willie and it was during his visits to Mary Ferguson's sick brother that the little winged god shot his love-tipped dart with such charming precision that it pierced the heart of each. Miss Mary did not return with the remains of her brother because of not being well enough, but it would appear that there were other reasons and that Dr. Blinn has 'saved Mary's life by loving her.' The marriage of Miss Mary Ferguson, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. William A. Ferguson, of Harrison, Ohio, formerly of this city, and Dr. Charles Blinn, of Socorro, New Mexico, is announced to take place in that city this evening, June 1, 1899. The JOURNAL joins their legion of friends in wishing them health, happiness and long life."*

"My grandfather, Dr. Blinn, actually had three little girls from his first marriage, but one of them died when his first wife died. His two remaining daughters were Mary and Ruth, and by the time my mother was born in 1908, Mary was 22 and Ruth was 17. My grandfather was about 15 years older than my grandmother. Along with my mother, my maternal grandparents had two sons: my Uncle William, then three years later my mom, Olivia, and then two years later, my Uncle John. My mom was very close to her half-sisters, Mary and Ruth.

"My mom's mom used to tell my sisters and me stories about when she and my grandfather lived in New Mexico. He would visit his patients by buggy. There were so many stories, but for some reason the one that always stuck with me was when my grandfather rode his buggy out to a home where a baby had died, it was a twin, and the baby's parents had laid their baby out on the table of an old sewing machine, in the best swaddling clothing they had with a violet in their baby's mouth."

Horse-drawn buggies in the early days of the last century in Socorro were designed with narrow high wheels, a dashboard to hold back the mud, and a protective top to journey the harsh terrain. There was enough room in the fairly light buggy to carry medical supplies, a physician's bag and a lantern. Due to the distances and not-easy accessibility to rural patients, horse-drawn buggies remained the better choice for a physician, rather than an automobile, until sometime between 1910 and 1920 when road improvements became affordable.

"I'm not exactly sure what year my mom's parents moved back to Ohio. It was before my mother was born but my mother's oldest brother, William, was born in Socorro in 1905. With my grandmother's parents living in Ohio – that was probably a good reason to move back. My grandmother's dad, Rev. William Ferguson, was the Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Bellefontaine, Ohio, for many years. My mother's father ended up practicing medicine in Bellefontaine for 40 years."

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"My father had no living siblings. He had an older brother who died as an infant. He was born eight years before my father and my dad used to say if his brother had been born eight years after my father was born, his brother would have lived. His brother died from pyloric stenosis."

←Mary's dad, Dr. Clark McReight Dougherty, 1933.

Pyloric stenosis is a condition in infants where food becomes trapped in the stomach and little or no food passes into the intestine. This causes severe projectile vomiting, weight loss, constant hunger and dehydration. Life-saving surgery for this now very treatable condition came along in 1912. Before that, most babies who had it died. Mary's father's brother's name was Frank. He was born on May 21, 1896, and died at just 2 months of age on July 21, 1896. He is buried in the United Baptist Cemetery in Antioch, Ohio.

"Unlike my mother, whose mom was the daughter of a Presbyterian Reverend and so my mom was raised Presbyterian and she, in turn, raised all her daughters to

be Presbyterian, my father's upbringing, as far as religion, was more relaxed. His dad was a Catholic and his mom was a Baptist. Funny story, when my dad's dad died, apparently my paternal grandmother wouldn't let the priest in. I guess she was more Baptist than anyone thought!

"When we were growing up in New Philadelphia and my dad was a well-known doctor/surgeon, he was also well-known for being very proud of his Irish roots. Now, there were a group of Catholic nuns in town, and up until a doctor came to New Philadelphia who was also a Catholic, the only doctor the nuns would allow to treat them was my father. I guess they figured since his last name was Irish, he was almost a Catholic. He listed his religion as Presbyterian since he married one.

"But as far as my dad was concerned, he was totally Irish. He was interviewed by the local paper because he got to be the Grand Marshall of the St. Patrick's Day Parade in New Philadelphia. When the parade ended, he went to the J-N-G Grill and had corned beef and cabbage and green beer, of course, just like all the New Philadelphia Irish! That's where he was interviewed. My dad told all of his Irish stories. We were there. By the way, the J-N-G is still there. It was opened when I was a kid by three brothers. I don't know who owns it now but they've kept a good menu.

"Was my mother, Irish? She might have had some Irish, but she wouldn't admit to it. Her mother was a Ferguson which is Scottish. That she would admit to. I don't know what kind of a name her dad's name 'Blinn' was. I imagine it has French history since my mother's middle name was literally, 'French.'

"Who were my father's parents? His father was Matthew Clark Dougherty, and he was born in 1864 or 1865 and he died in 1931, so I never knew him. My dad's father's father was from Ireland. My grandfather Matthew was a teacher. Back in those days, if you got through the eighth grade you could become a teacher. He also went on to own and run a bank, and my dad would say that his father's bank was the only bank in town that made good on people's loans during the financial crash. My father's mother was Mary Agnes (McReight) Dougherty. She went by Agnes. She lived to be 95 and died in 1958."

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Mary does not remember the Great Depression. She was too young. It ended in 1939. But she knew some of her parents' stories.

"Of course I only remembered those stories that would really interest a kid. It turns out some of my father's patients were paying him in beans. Plus, both sets of grandparents gave them beans. My mother said they had about 30 pounds of beans at all times.

"My mother worked for my father in his office. He did his surgeries at the hospital, but he consulted with his patients, or his patients' parents depending on who needed what. We started out living in town, which I liked quite a bit. My best friend, a boy named Bobby, lived nearby. But then we moved to a big house at 7-Mile Drive. Our home was about two miles outside of town in the country and up a big hill. I did like the house. But I missed my friend Bobby.

"I do remember WWII. My father, who had a wife and all these kids, plus he was responsible for his mother and her two brothers that were still living – he volunteered after Pearl Harbor. He thought it was his duty. 1942 was a big year. I started school in the autumn, but prior to that, my mother went with my little sister Ruth Joyce to be with my father at the Army Base before he headed overseas. She was also pregnant in January or February of that year as she gave birth to my youngest sister Elizabeth in October of 1942. I thought my mother was gone for a year but for all I know, she was only gone a few weeks. It's a confusing time as far as my memory goes because I was so young. I remember at some point there was this lady that was taking care of us. Her name was Mrs. Moon and I thought, 'Don't tell me that is your name. You don't have anything to do with the moon!' I was wise beyond my years. At some point later, I stayed with my parents' friends the Meeses, definitely when my youngest sister was born. I don't know where Jane stayed, or Ruth Joyce, but my mother and baby Elizabeth may have stayed for a while with my mom's mom. She lived next to the railroad tracks in the little Ohio village of Rushsylvania."



Ruth Joyce, Jane and Mary, circa 1942/1943, with one of the Meese family members in downtown New Philadelphia.

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Mary's father, Lieut. Col. Clark M. Dougherty, was assigned to the U.S. Army's 113th General Hospital in Ahwaz, Iran, where he was chief of surgery. The 113th Station Hospital began with 750 beds and it was the largest American hospital in Iran. At one point, it became a 1,000-bed hospital. It served as a general hospital, treating all diseases and injuries. It also served as a clearinghouse for patients needing prolonged care. They were evacuated to the 38th General Hospital in Heliopolis, Egypt. Heliopolis was a critical U.S., British and Australian military hub with multiple hospitals and headquarters to serve the desert campaign troops.

While Mary's dad was serving in Iran, he made the newspaper in New Philadelphia. Winifred "Winnie" English, the society editor of *The Daily Reporter* in the New Philadelphia neighboring town of Dover, joined the Red Cross and was assigned to the 113th General Hospital. The story which ran on February 6, 1945, noted the following. *"Lieut. Col. Dougherty, in a letter to Mrs. Dougherty yesterday, revealed that he had met Miss English and that the two had enjoyed a long 'gab fest.' The former has been stationed at the desert hospital for the past 23 months and met former Coach Stan Plummer when the latter was serving overseas with a Red Cross unit last summer. Miss English is a hospital staff aide."*

"My father served four years and none of us were happy about it. I remember when he came home and I saw him approaching the house in a car and I said, 'My dad has grey hair.' I know he saw a lot, but he really only told us two things. He said he had treated a lot of Russian patients and they were very nice people. He also told us this story about the local bakery – a story that clearly had some holes in it. Apparently it was his job to check out the bakery. He told us the bakers always baked at night because it was cooler. But this particular time, the bakers had to run out of the building in mid preparation because there was an air raid. When my father got to the bakery, he said there was dough coming out of the windows. However, he noted in conclusion, the bakery was not hit so it all ended happily.

"We had a few tall-tale storytellers in the family. When my dad was away, sometimes my mom's dad would drive us to school and tell us stories. My mom's parents would often stay with us to help out while my dad was serving. When they did, they'd bring their male cat Pinky. My grandfather told us one day, that Pinky had kittens but no one could find them and they looked everywhere. It was a lie and he wasn't even Irish!

"During the War, I remember spending one Christmas without either my mother or father. That was very hard. My dad being gone for so long was also very hard. My mom, of course, did come home from being away with my dad and having a baby. I do recall when I was staying with the Meese family that they had blackout curtains. I also remember, and this was when we were all back in our family home – everyone except my dad – that there was a great formation of planes that flew over our house. I counted 50 of them. They were from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base which is west of New Philadelphia. That was quite something to see."

Located near Dayton, Ohio, during the War, Patterson Field was a huge military hub supporting Air Corps operations worldwide. It handled maintenance, modification and it was a major U.S. Army Air Forces training center. It operated alongside the adjacent Wright Field whose focus was engineering, aeronautical research, testing and procurement.

"Another great difficulty of my childhood during the War," Mary stopped to chuckle, "was that Hershey's Chocolate came out with this tropical bar. They made it so it could endure high heat, just in case that was a problem where our troops were located. It was awful!"

Said to taste like a boiled potato, Hershey's purposefully developed these heat-resistant and intentionally bad-tasting "Field Ration D" bars to prevent soldiers from eating them as snacks. But they were designed to be eaten in an emergency. They were high in calories (cocoa butter, sugar, skim milk powder, oat flour

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and chocolate liquor) and designed to withstand high heat (up to 120°F). Mary noted she was still trying to forget the taste.

"We watched newsreels during the War and listened to the radio. I remember when President Roosevelt died in April of 1945. My mom's dad came over and told us and it was pretty shocking."

Mary went to Central Grade School in New Philadelphia. She was in their first graduating class.

"I discovered my best musical talent in kindergarten. I got to play the triangle and you had to be good. You had to come in on the right beat. But then any ideas of a music career evaded me after that. I played the tonette in grade school. I remember in fourth grade, I was one of a number of kids playing in a performance on the local high school stage. My mother told me she could hear me playing tonette and she was very proud. 'Well,' I thought, 'Now I know my mother lies because I wasn't playing.' Ha! Ha! But like all of my siblings, I took piano as a kid. I, however, wasn't very good at it. I had to walk from school to my teacher's house and I got lost before the second lesson and when I got to her house, she told me I was too late for the lesson and I had to wait to get picked up standing outside of her house. That ended any dreams I had of being a musician, though fortunately, I did not have any such dreams."

Mary noted all three of her sisters were quite musical.

"My three sisters were very successful with their piano lessons. My oldest sister, Jane, also played the violin and she was quite good. She played violin with the Santa Maria and Lompoc Symphony orchestras out here in California. She played piano for herself at home. I remember years ago, I took her to hear the San Francisco Symphony when she was out visiting and she had never, at that point, been to a big symphony. She enjoyed it so much. My sister Ruth Joyce plays the violin and Elizabeth plays the cello."



Because her family lived two miles out of town and up a serious hill, Mary did not do much bike riding as a kid. Her family did have a horse for a while, which she thoroughly enjoyed riding. They always had dogs and cats, and at one point, several rabbits as pets as well.

←The house that Mary grew up in.

"We did play Hide and Go Seek up on the hill. Lots of places to hide out in the country – we could have been hidden and never found, but we were too smart for that. We enjoyed having a roof over our head and good meals.

"We had a laundry chute in our home. This one girl was visiting and she was watching our aunt's kids who were over, and we decided to go down the chute. Well we, the Dougherty children, did okay. We shot down from the second floor to the basement without a problem. But this girl, when she went down, she went over a sharp edge of some sort. She had to get some stitches and be treated for an infection. We only did that once. Our sports career was ended before it got going.

The family had chickens during the War.

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"When my dad went into the service he gave my mom 50 chickens—so we'd always have plenty to eat—and a shotgun. I guess that was to chase off any animals that tried to eat the chickens. They had this outbuilding and my poor mother used to have to carry boiling water to where these chickens were during the winter to unthaw their drinking water. We did not name the chickens because we ate them. We kept the chickens after the War but my father took over that responsibility. But during the War, my sister Elizabeth had to wear toddler chicken shoes because my mother needed to bring her down there with her.

"Was I a good little kid? Well, we had neighbors that had a cellar and my older sister and I got in there and opened one of their big jars and ate some of their dill pickles, and they were good pickles! Pretty wild, huh? Then we went to another neighbor's, this is when we lived in town. The milkman used to deliver milk in glass bottles and the cream was up at the top. We'd steal the milk and drink the cream. My sister started it!

"My childhood was good. We would go to Tuscora Park. They had a beautiful carousel that we loved, it's still there. It had one of those grand Wurlitzer Band Organs and that is still there as well. They had pony rides, and at one time, they had a little zoo which had at least monkeys and bears and a little peacock. They had a couple of swimming pools and we went swimming there. Long before I was born they called it 'The Coney Island of Eastern Ohio.' There was a stadium built there around the time I was born and my high school used to play football there and still does. It had a Ferris wheel and that's still there. You could go ice skating there on a pond that froze over in the winter.

"I was in 4-H. We did sewing and crafting. I remember making a dress and knitting a pair of socks. We did have some goats at one point, Billy and Nanny. They got into everything. They were all over our neighbors' properties. We found them another home."

Mary had a good relationship with both of her mom's brothers, John and William, but with John more so because he lived locally.

"My Uncle John was a lot of fun. Like his father, he was a doctor. He started his practice in New Philadelphia the year that I was born. During the Second World War, like my dad, he enlisted, and he was a lieutenant colonel in the Medical Corps. He served somewhere in the Pacific Theatre during the War and while I'm sure he saw a lot, he managed to survive the War. In 1950, he was heading to the office to see a patient who had a broken arm. On the way, he was hit by a bus and was thrown from his car. He bashed his head against a telephone pole and was never able to practice medicine after that due to brain damage. That was a hard one for me to understand. He survived a horrible war but not the streets of New Philadelphia."

Mary's grandparents, her mom's mom and dad, and her dad's mom were also a very important part of her childhood, and she always enjoyed seeing them.

"I was visiting my dad's mom in her home one day, and this was when the iceman used to come to people's homes. My grandmother was getting her hair done in her home. She was old and she didn't get out much. I think she was a little older than me when she died. Anyway, the iceman knocked on her door and she said to the woman cutting her hair, 'Don't let him in.' But the lady did let him in because she needed to. My grandmother paid him and he said to my grandmother, 'You have such beautiful hair,' and she did. It was long and it was more blonde than white, at that age. The next time he came, she made sure she had her hair washed and taken care of in advance! You are never too old to be vain, I guess!"

Mary's paternal grandmother Agnes Dougherty, died at age 95 in June of 1958.

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Mary, who in her retirement became quite a volunteer in her Pacifica community, said she learned volunteerism from her parents.

"My dad worked a lot. Three days a week he had office hours, and the rest of his working time was doing surgeries. As a surgeon, his specialty was orthopedics, but he did everything. When he came home from the War, he still did all of that, but that's when he began his longtime volunteerism with the local VFW and the American Legion. He was Commander of both at some point. He became President of the local Kiwanis Club. He was on the board of the local Savings and Loan, because his father had been in banking. My mom worked for my dad in his office. She also did volunteer work at the hospital; it was some sort of volunteer work with children in the evening. She was also a member of the Sorosis Club."

The Sorosis Club is a professional women's club that works with women in education, science, journalism and the arts. It is the first professional women's club in the United States.

"My mother was also in a garden club and several bridge groups, and both my parents were active in the church. My mom taught Sunday school for a while and my dad was a Church Trustee."

Family vacations were to her dad's medical conventions. Atlantic City, New Jersey, was a remembered favorite vacation, as was a convention in Ocean City, NJ, when the family stayed in a cabin right above the beach.



Mary went to New Philadelphia High School.

←Mary Dougherty, junior year, New Philadelphia, 1953.

"When I was in high school, I had a job at my dad's office. I would sit with the kids recovering from tonsillectomies. I worked on a playground one summer, supervising kids, and we had our chores around the house.

"My dad taught all of his daughters how to drive when we were in high school. We all learned on a 3-on-the-tree, a stick shift. I remember he took us to learn out on an icy road. You've definitely got those in Ohio and you need to know what to do. Sometimes my dad would let us drive him out to his calls in the country. He used to say about this one little town, "There are 13 bars and only 13 people." I remember sometimes his patients out in the country would pay him with what they called, 'dago' wine. Funny, in my dad's later years, he belonged to a winemakers' club and he made good wine.

"Who were my favorite singers in high school? We couldn't listen to the radio because we had to do our homework, but we had an old Victrola. We did listen to The Mills Brothers. They were from Bellefontaine, Ohio, which is just a couple of hours west of New Philadelphia. I liked Harry Belafonte and Nat King Cole. They were my favorites. Now, my favorite is Willie Nelson. His voice has character in it."

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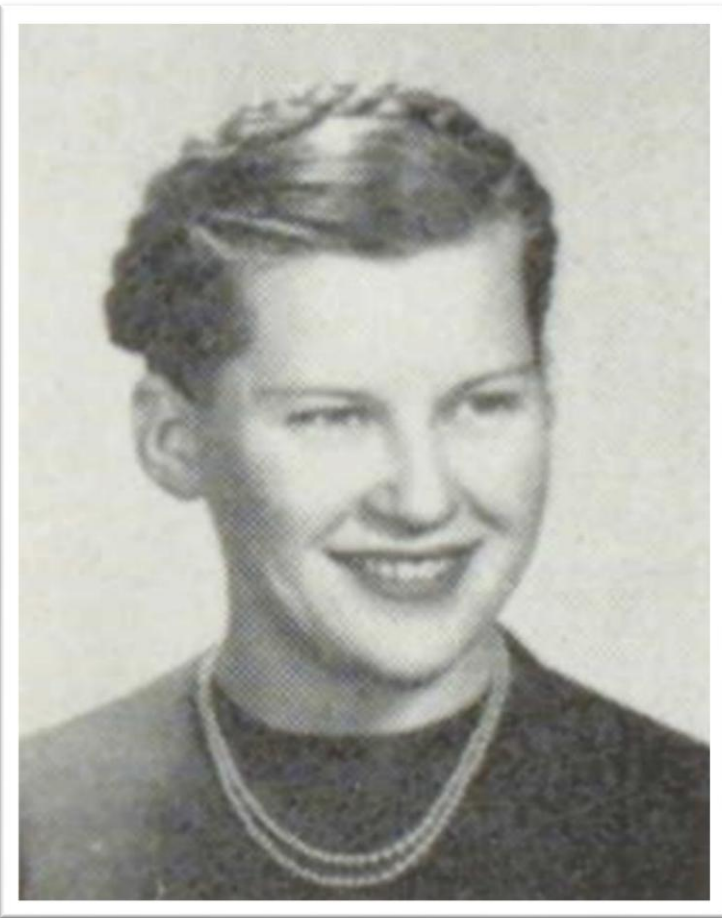
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There was no McDonald's in New Philadelphia when Mary was growing up. That didn't arrive until 1974, and by then, she was living in California. Mary said that really, there was no take-out food in particular except from the family's favorite take-out restaurant, Angelina's.

"Before pizza restaurants became so popular, before McDonald's was everywhere, when I was a kid, we would go to Angelina's. She had a restaurant in her house. You'd bring a pot to put your spaghetti in, and something else to put your salad in, and something else to put your sauce in and she always gave my dad some hot peppers. He loved those and Angelina's was our take-out treat. It was delicious.

"That reminds me, when I was in high school, I took this home economic class but I realized immediately, the teacher didn't know anything. She told us, 'The reason why you have spaghetti with bread is to have a balanced diet.' What was she talking about? The reason you have spaghetti with bread is because it is delicious. You need that bread to scrape the spaghetti up."



Alongside Mary's senior photo, it was noted that, "Mary is both dignified and merry." It also noted that Mary was in the Future Nurses Club, where she served as Vice President, and she was also a member of the Future Teachers of America Club.

"Being in the Future Teachers of America mostly meant sitting with your classmates if your teacher couldn't be there. That wasn't very appealing! As to the Future Nurses Club, I hadn't really decided yet what I wanted to do, though both teaching and nursing seemed acceptable career choices."

←Mary Jean Dougherty, senior year, New Philadelphia High School, 1954.

Like all of her sisters, Mary went to college. Jane headed out first to Western College for Women.

"Jane stayed in college for three years but then she got a great job as a flight attendant for TWA, and she went with that. She met her husband through the

airline. Then she had her three boys – Howard, Joe and Bill. They were all at my 90th! Many years ago, Joe lived with me for a while in Pacifica, not too long, about eight months. He was working on a job for his father and taking courses at San Francisco State. I loved having him stay here and of course I introduced him to one of my favorite foods out here in the Bay Area, Chinese food. When I was growing up in New Philadelphia, there was no Chinese restaurant to be found. When I went back for a visit, when I was living out here, everyone was so excited to take me to the one Chinese Restaurant. But though the company was great, the food did not compare at all to Chinese food in San Francisco, or Pacifica, or anywhere in the Bay Area. And before I get back to the subject at hand, me, as I mentioned all of my sisters went to college. Ruth Joyce studied speech and hearing and became a speech pathologist. Elizabeth

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studied music and became a music teacher. All three of my sisters married and made me a very lucky and proud aunt, great-aunt and great-great-aunt.

"I began college at Ohio University in Athens and I began with education. The Dean told me I could do a combination of nursing and teaching, and teach science in the schools. But when he left the school, so did that program. So I decided to do nursing. I graduated from Bethesda Hospital School of Nursing in 1960. I worked a little bit at the infirmary in college. When I graduated, I moved to Cleveland and took a job at University Hospital in Cleveland. I made \$5,500 a year, which was not bad money then (close to \$60,000 a year in today's wages). I did direct patient care. I provided wound care and assisted with medications. I monitored things like blood pressure, heart rate and the patient's temperature. Essentially it was comprehensive bedside care and I also kept patient charts, things of that sort."

"After a year in Cleveland, I got a job with the Cincinnati VA Hospital. First I worked in medicine. Then all of a sudden, I got called down to the head nurse's office. I thought, 'Oh, geez, what have I done?' But it turns out they wanted to ask me if I would work as a psychiatric nurse. Psychiatric nursing is where I scored the highest on my National State Boards. I did do that for 7 or 8 years. We had a pretty high patient volume of kids who went to Vietnam."

Mary's job included: managing inpatient wards, monitoring patients for safety, administering antipsychotic medications as necessary, and being involved with the rehabilitative care needed to allow veterans to return to community life.

"Something I have always believed since I was very young was that all persons should be respected. When I was 12, I was in my dad's office and someone came to the door. I opened it, because all the adults were elsewhere, and this lady was there and she was old and she said, 'They have my parents locked up in the cellar.' I knew that probably wasn't true and I said, 'Why don't you go home. I think they are okay now.' Suddenly my aunt was standing next to me, and she said to this elderly lady, 'Go away! Go away!' I felt sorry for this lady. I knew there was a better way to deal with this and that pretty much settled it with me, to always do better."

Mary said the biggest historic event that happened when she was living and working in Cincinnati, was the Kent State University shootings on May 4, 1970. By 1970, thousands of Americans were protesting the United States involvement in the War in Vietnam. In the spring of 1970, college deferment for the draft was ended raising the public's temperature nationwide. On April 30, President Nixon addressed the nation via television and radio announcing that major ground operations would begin in Cambodia, "The Cambodia Campaign." On May 1, students at Kent State University held an anti-war protest. On May 2, the Mayor of Kent requested National Guard troops. On that same day, the ROTC building on campus caught on fire. By May 3rd, 1,000 National Guard troops were on campus. Protestors pitched rocks at the Guardsman and the Guardsman responded with tear gas. The National Guard took control of the campus and a curfew was issued. Classes resumed on May 4 and there was a ban on assemblies. Nevertheless, a student protest was planned at noon. The protest opposed the United States expansion of the Vietnam War into Cambodia. Demonstrators also gathered to protest the draft and the presence of the National Guard on campus. The protest began as planned and at 24 minutes past noon, 28 National Guardsmen fired 61 to 67 rounds, over a period of 13 seconds, into the crowd. When the shooting stopped, nine students lay wounded and three students – Allison Krause, Jeff Miller and Sandy Scheuer lay dead. A fourth student, Bill Schroeder, was pronounced dead at the hospital. Sandra Scheuer and Bill Schroeder had not been participants in the protest. They were simply on their way to class. Of the nine wounded, 20-year-old Dean Kahler's wound in the small of his back was the most serious, causing permanent paralysis from the waist down. The incident created a nationwide student strike, ultimately leading to the participation of 4 million students at colleges, universities and high schools across the country.

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"I was living and working in Cincinnati at that time and following those shootings, things really erupted all over the country. But in Cincinnati, which is about 250 miles southwest of Kent State, the immediate result was a massive student strike. Probably 1,000 students or more took to the streets in Cincinnati the night of the shootings. There were a lot of police out. There were military guys riding through the streets. I remember the barricades. There was a lot of fear, though it did not turn violent."

By May of 1970, Mary was thinking that she needed a change from psychiatric nursing. Her sister Jane had moved to Sunnyvale and Mary thought she would move out to California and look for a nursing job at one of the Bay Area VA hospitals.

"Jane's husband was working in Greenland and Jane was living in Sunnyvale with their three boys. Then she got divorced and she moved to Lompoc, which is about 30 miles north of Santa Barbara. I remained in the Bay Area."

Mary got a job with the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Until she moved to Pacifica, she lived right across the street from the VA in an apartment on Clement Street.

"This was still in 1970. I did not do psychiatric medicine. I started out at the San Francisco VA in 'medicine.' That means you pass out pills and give shots and interview patients, and that sort of thing. When I started, I worked all three shifts until a permanent shift position opened up in GU (Genitourinary/Urology) and ENT (ear, nose and throat)."

While GU and ENT are usually distinct departments, a nurse with expertise in both frequently works within a comprehensive perioperative or surgical team, managing both acute and chronic conditions. Mary worked the 3:30 to midnight shift which she liked.

"My parents came out for a visit when I lived in San Francisco. I think everyone came out, at one time or another when I lived in the City."



Mary's folks, Olivia and Clark, circa 1960s.

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"The AIDS epidemic, which began in 1981, was a big part of the care we provided at the San Francisco VA hospital in the 1980s. It was such a stressful time – horrible for our patients and their families, and really hard emotionally on all the healthcare workers. We were all frontline workers during that time and so many of our young patients died.

"In general, I had many young patients. I remember one fairly young patient and he had cancer. He was in so much pain that I guess he couldn't take any medicine on his own at home. I gave him a shot to help with the pain and then once the pain went away, he died. I guess once the pain was gone, he could go.

"We had long-term patients at the VA. I remember one guy came in with cancer and he asked me if I could put him out of his misery, but I couldn't do that. He had been a pilot. I was there when he was admitted and I ended up caring for him, along with other patients of course, for three years. He was a really nice person and I was sorry to see him go.

"We did have female veterans, of course. I remember there was a small lady with cancer and she was living at the VA but she did get a pass to go out sometimes. She always made it a point to put her makeup on and she always looked lovely. She was not a person given to complaining but one day I asked her, 'What did you have to eat today?' 'Well,' she told me, 'I had an egg.' In those days it was thought that no one should have more than one egg a day, but that's about the only thing she could really eat. I mentioned this to her doctor and he about hit the fan. He saw to it, immediately, that all patients could have more than one egg a day. She ended up dying, and when she died, before she left the hospital one of the LVNs did her hair and her makeup which I thought was so kind and the right thing to do. She would have liked it. There is often a lot of quiet kindness that staff performs in a hospital."

In 1978, Mary bought her house in Pacifica for \$56,000. "Who can believe that now?" She didn't know Pacifica until she found that house. But she loved the ocean views and the community and the tasty restaurants. What are her favorite restaurants, now?

"Oh, that's easy. I love Raymond's Chinese Restaurant and I am also a very big fan of Pacifica Thai Cuisine. I've heard there is a Thai Restaurant in New Philadelphia now, but I don't know, can it be anywhere near as delicious?"

Mary worked for the VA Hospital health care system for a total of 30 years until she was injured helping a patient get up.

"He had a catheter and an IV going. He was trying to be helpful and my goal was to get him up in a chair. But unfortunately, his help resulted in my rupturing a disc and I ended up retiring.

Mary's done some traveling. She's been on several cruises, particularly around the Caribbean, and if she wants to see a performance that is local enough, she sees it, unless it's Willie Nelson, than she travels.

"At one point, I had season tickets to the 49ers games. Of course, this was before season tickets became prohibitive. I do enjoy the San Francisco Warriors and used to go to some of their games. One time when my sister Ruth Joyce came out, we went to one of the Official U.S. Figure Skating championship events in San Jose. We had fun! This was when the event first started in San Jose in 1996 and we got tickets to everything. We took a bottle of wine and cold cuts, and sat in the car during breaks.

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Mary really enjoys going to the Chit-Chat Café on Manor to hear the music and she has her favorites, some of whom she named here.

"Saturday morning with Rob Wullenjohn – I like to hear him, he's really good. I also like Peter Innes. When I don't get to the Chit-Chat, I can find them both on YouTube. Peter has some great stuff from his youth and he has a YouTube Channel. I also like Blind Lemon Pledge, John Hall, and the Sing The Beatles Band. I always say, if there wasn't an audience, there wouldn't be any music! And here's the other thing about the Chit-Chat, you meet the best people there and that definitely includes Evelyn and Tom Safiri."

It turns out Evelyn and Tom are huge fans of Mary, which Evelyn recently made clear when I tracked her down for comments on her friend.

"Tom and I met Mary at the Chit-Chat Café in the spring of 2010, when Tom and I started attending musical performances there," Evelyn began. "Mary was always accompanied by her best friend and neighbor, the late Joanne Zavoral, and usually Joanne's daughter and son-in-'love,' JoLynn and Jerry Ruedas. It was obvious these four were family and had been for decades."



A couple of music fans at the Chit-Chat: Joanne Zavoral and Mary Dougherty, September 2014. (Evelyn Safiri photo.)

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"For many of us, Mary is the matriarch of our Chit-Chat family and she is much loved and respected. In the 16 years that I have been at our little 'senior center/country club' regularly, the joy in the air noticeably rises when Mary comes in. She loves to give the musicians all of her attention, happily tapping along on the tabletop. Music has been a passion of Mary's for many years, and no one has done a better job of promoting the Café and the musicians who perform there than Mary. (Musicians perform there for free.)

"When Mary fell last year and spent several weeks recovering at the Pacifica Nursing & Rehab Center – just around the corner from the Chit-Chat – every time we went to visit her, she introduced us to new friends, both patients and staff. She had excitedly told them all about the Café. At one point, Mary showed up at the Chit-Chat with five of her Rehab friends to introduce them to the experience. Most of them made the trek from Rehab in their wheelchairs or using walkers. The whole front of the Chit-Chat was reserved for them. They had so much fun and so did everyone.

"Among Mary's many wonderful traits are her intelligence, her droll comments and her sense of humor. I never laugh harder than when I am in her presence. She is a dedicated Samaritan who goes out of her way to do the right thing and lend a helping hand when she can, whether it is to help move furniture for a Pacifica Historical Society's rummage sale or give monetarily. On several occasions through the years, Mary's magnanimous donations have allowed us to reach and even exceed fundraising goals, contributing greatly to keeping the Chit-Chat in business during and after COVID.

"We look up to Mary not just for who she is and what she does, but as a strong example of how we can all lead gratifying and accomplished lives with love."

"We think the world of Mary at the Pacifica Historical Society," said Kathleen Manning, PHS member and Board of Directors Emeritus. "She was an original member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society and she has been a longtime volunteer. She worked so many fundraising events to restore the Little Brown Church to our present day Pacifica Coastside Museum, and she was there again to help bring in the funds needed for the ongoing restoration work on the last passenger car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, Car 1409. I can't even name all the fundraising events she has worked but they include our: rummage sales, train and antique doll shows, and our Bob Milne ragtime concerts."

"I got involved with our Historical Society originally through Helen James," Mary smiled. "Back in the day, I used to go to all the street fairs and I was at a street fair in San Mateo Park. There was an exhibit on trains and Helen James was there and she talked about Pacifica. Helen James was such a wonderful person and she was very dedicated to honoring the history of her adopted hometown. Like me, she was from out of state. She was from Duluth, Minnesota. U.S. history was always a favorite subject of mine in school, and that, along with really valuing what Helen was doing, and loving my adopted town, immediately made me a Historical Society member. The first thing I did was work with Helen as a 'clipper.'"

The PHS clipper volunteers cut out articles from old issues of the *Pacifica Tribune* to preserve history on the city, its people, its art and its schools. The purpose was to create and maintain a comprehensive local archive.

"Through the Pacifica Historical Society, I have met so many good, good people, all movers and shakers in this town: Helen James, Kathleen Manning, Bill Hall, Shirlee Gibbs, Grace McCarthy, Grace's daughter Pat and her husband Jim Kremer, Deidra and Jerry Crow, and the list goes on. Through the Historical Society I found out about one of the best shops in town, Prints Old and Rare. When you volunteer, you not only help your community, you meet your community.

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"Having lived in Pacifica for 48 years, I like to think my recommendations might hold some weight! Some things I have already mentioned: visit the Pacifica Coastside Museum and learn about all about what they do, including Car 1409 and of course our made-first-here Pacifica Jack Cheese. Donate to the Pacifica Historical Society. They are all nonpaid worker bees saving our history. Go to Pacifica Performances. It is an incredible music venue with such a variety of top-notch musicians. Sometimes John Hall plays there and that is always a fantastic show. Go to the Chit-Chat Café for great music, great food and a wonderful selection of beverages. Buy tickets to our Pacifica Spindrif Players performances. They consistently put on excellent shows, which is often true in a smaller city. Go to Mazzetti's Bakery. Any cake I get, I get from there. And of course, go to Raymond's Chinese Food and Pacifica Thai Cuisine."



Before Mary and I headed into the final stretch of her interview, Mary's cat Tessie, short for "Contessa Louella," arrived demanding pats and another round of cat food.

"As I mentioned, I grew up with dogs and cats and an assortment of other pet family members, but cats have been my constant. Tessie is a rescue but as she will tell you, I was put here to serve her needs."

←Contessa Louella "Tessie" Dougherty, 2025-ish.

* * *

Mary decided it was mandatory to plug another group of artists she always liked, the folk music quartet The Weavers.

"I always loved their music and still do. They broke up in the early 1960s and their last reunion concert was in November of 1980. Lee Hays was one of the founders of The Weavers and he had this great, deep bass voice and he was very funny. He brought both of those things to their performances. He sang in The Weavers final reunion concert at Carnegie Hall in 1980. He died in 1981 and had his ashes scattered in a garden where they subsequently planted tomatoes at his

request because, he said, he wanted to become part of his favorite summer salad. That always makes me laugh. It also is the inspiration behind what I say now about me. 'When I die, scatter my ashes in a garden and when the vegetables start coming up, someone should say, 'My, that tomato looks just like Mary.'"

Mary almost doesn't laugh, though there is no "almost" for me. Mary continued.

"People here in the Bay Area say, 'Well, how are you today?' And people respond, 'Well, my arthritis is acting up and/or I am going to have a hip replacement. Or I have this, that and the other thing.'

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"Back in Ohio, they say, 'Well, how are you doing today?' And people answer, 'Well, my tomatoes are coming in, my cucumbers are coming in and my zucchini is doing good and I think I am going to have a good crop of green beans this year.' That's the way to answer that question. Willie Nelson's son Lukas Nelson has a song, 'Turn Off The News (Build A Garden)' instead. This to me is a better way to look at the world and be a part of it."



Mary Jean Dougherty, on the occasion of her 90th birthday party held at Pacifica's Chit-Chat Café on her day, March 1, 2026. (Evelyn Safiri photo.)



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author. Jean's writing has been recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "connecting community and preserving local history."

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