

BETTY JANE WILLS

Scarlet Oak Circle, The Knolls

Betty Jane Wills was born in Athens, Ohio in 1919 and has lived her entire life in Ohio. She celebrated her 100th birthday this year.

She met and married her husband, Woodrow “Woody” Wills in Athens where they were both going to school. They were married for 70 years. After leaving Athens, they spent their early years in a number of small towns as Woody coached and taught in high schools.

She and her husband moved to Oxford in 1947. She has seen the town grow up during those years. Oxford in the early years was a great place to raise children. She remembers that one did not have to lock ones’ doors and that there was never a problem about allowing the children to play outside.

When they first moved to Oxford 72 years ago, there was only one restaurant on High Street, The Colonial Inn. There was a functioning movie theatre. Snyder’s was the biggest variety store. Shillito’s was the best department store. Mahaney’s Hardware store became what is now the Ace Hardware store. Oxford has changed.

She and Woody raised their children, Don and Susie, in Oxford. Don was 4 when they moved here, while Susie was born in Oxford. Both went to McGuffey school and then graduated from Talawanda High School. Don was granted a full academic scholarship to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. Don became a professor of English at Mohawk Valley Community College, in Utica, NY, where he taught for 30 years. His wife, Diane, also was a professor of English Literature at Clinton College, in Clinton, NY.

Susie graduated from Miami University and married Stuart Eversole who became the Athletic Director at Lakota High School. Susie worked in the Media Center at Lakota High School. They had two children: Ben and Janna. Ben had two boys, Betty’s great grandsons, who live in Lexington, Kentucky. Janna had a daughter, Betty’s great granddaughter. She lives in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

Woody was both a football and baseball coach at Miami from 1948 to 1981.

Woody coached for Woody Hayes, Ara Parseghian, John Pont, Bo Schembechler and Bill Mallory. He was associated with some of the greatest football coaches in twentieth century America.

While Woody coached, Betty raised their two children. After the children were grown, Betty inherited a photographic studio, the Wills Studio, which she ran for ten years. Wills Studio specialized in taking sorority photos. After ten years in the photography business, Betty sold out and began selling real estate. One of the differences she notes between then and now is that she could specialize selling homes, while now there are many more apartment buildings. The biggest changes she has seen in her time in Oxford are the growth of apartment buildings, the growth of the University, the addition of the football field and the new Talawanda High School.

Betty is a wonderful Bridge player and is particularly pleased that she has earned the honor of being named a Life Master in Duplicate Bridge. She has participated in tournaments in Cincinnati, Dayton and Las Vegas.

Despite always living in Ohio, Betty has travelled widely. She has visited Bangkok, Hong Kong and Egypt. She and her husband, Woody, took many cruises to Mexico, Alaska and the Caribbean, and she has travelled extensively throughout the United States visiting nearly every state, except Minnesota.

After her husband's death, Betty moved into the Knolls. She finds it an ideal place to live and feels very reassured to have people around her. She is a delightful and charming lady who enjoys her neighbors and life. It is a pleasure to have a chance to visit with her.

Arlie Allen