

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP SKETCH
of
MARY MAXWELL HUTCHESON
(MRS. FLETCHER C. HUTCHESON)

Submitted by the Women of the Church
Bayside Presbyterian Church
Virginia Beach, Va.

Mary Maxwell Hutcheson is the daughter of Annette Henry Maxwell and Frederick W. Maxwell. Mary was born in Jacksonville, Florida, but the family moved to West Palm Beach in 1923 when she was two years old. She had two brothers, Frederick Jr. and Edgar W. and a sister, Anna Jo. They grew up in Memorial Presbyterian Church in West Palm Beach, where her father was an Elder and her mother was active in all phases of the Woman's Work of the Church. It followed that Mary too was an active Christian of the Presbyterian persuasion.

In 1940 she was graduated from West Palm Beach High School and entered Agnes Scott College where she majored in mathematics and history, and from which she was graduated in 1944 with B.A. degree.

Sometime in her first or second year of college, Mary had served on the Youth Council of the Synod of Florida and had been sent as a delegate of the Synod to the Youth Conference at Montreat. So she had two parallel interests, math and young people's work. Montreat was familiar ground to Mary, whose parents had rented a cottage at Montreat every summer for years.

Following her college graduation, she worked for over three years as an electronic engineer for the Bureau of Ships, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., designing loud speakers and amplifiers for shipboard use and writing their specifications.

While in Washington, Mary belonged to the Church of the Pilgrims in Washington, D. C., and was on the Youth Council for Potomac Presbytery. In 1946 she was sent to the Youth Conference at Montreat, N. C. There she met Fletcher C. Hutcheson, who was there as a member of the West Hanover Presbytery Youth Council. He had recently returned from his Army service in World War II and his release from imprisonment by the Germans.

This was a momentous event in both their lives, as the outgrowth of that meeting was Fletcher's and Mary's marriage a year later in June 1947. Fletcher had then had two years at Hampden-Sydney College preparing for the ministry and had two years to finish after his war service overseas. So they lived in Farmville, Virginia, following

their marriage. While Fletcher studied, Mary taught in high school in 1947-48, and in 1948-49 worked at Farmville Presbyterian Church as Pastor's Assistant, "a sort of Secretary and D.C.E. combination," Mary says, and certainly good training for a woman who would assume the delicate and sometimes difficult position of being the wife of a minister.

After Fletcher's graduation from Hampden-Sydney, they went to Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. in the fall of 1949. While they were at Seminary their first child, Mary, was born in 1950 and Fletcher Jr. was born in 1952. Fletcher was graduated from the Seminary in 1952. His (or should I say "their") first pastorate was in Tabor City, N. C. They were there three and a half years and Mary was active in the Woman's Work of the church.

In January 1956 they came to the Presbyterian Church at Altavista, Va., where they stayed until 1959. While they were there, Lynn was born in 1957, and Mary served on West Hanover Presbyterial Council and led workshops for Woman's Work.

In June of 1959 they moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, where Mary aided Fletcher with organization of a brand new church, organizing the Women of the Church and its Circles, working through Sunday School and Vacation Church Schools, and planning Presbyterial Workshops and Vacation Church Schools. The Covenant Life Curriculum was introduced in the denomination during this time and their church was asked to use and evaluate the new teaching material for the Board of Christian Education. Mary was appointed by the Session to be the liaison between their church and the Board. Leaving a well established new church behind, they left Florida in July of 1967 and came to Bayside Presbyterian Church where Fletcher did his crowning work as Pastor, but always with Mary's support and encouragement.

Here at Bayside we have been privileged to observe Mary's unselfish service, her dedication to her Lord, her husband, and their family and the wisdom and grace with which she has filled the office of being a good Pastor's wife.

Mary returned to teaching "math," as her children approached college age, in order to help educate them. While always willing to teach Bible Classes or Circle Bible Studies or other duties in the church, she preferred the role of enabling both her husband and her children, of being the source of quiet encouragement for them and for many of us.

We have seen her gentle strength as she has borne, with great courage and faith, the loss of her beloved partner on February 9, 1981. She continues to be part of us and we are grateful for that and we seek to tell her so as we offer her a Life Membership in the Women of the Church.

The fruits of Mary's joint ministry with Fletcher are best shown through the eyes and lives of their three children.

Their elder daughter, the Rev. Mary H. Johns, writes, "When I think about Mom adjectives like steadfast, trustworthy, faithful come to mind. As an adult and friend, I admire her perseverance in channelling her time, energy and talents toward others in a multitude of creative ways which add richness to life, her steadfast commitment to teaching. As I look back on our childhood, I see Mom as the glue which held our family together in the face of pressures and strains which all families experience. I am grateful for her patience and warmth, her constant caring for us, the sympathetic understanding which she always offers. As I find myself engaged in building new family relationships with Harry, Brian and Megan, Mom's model of loving service in our home is one from which I draw strength and encouragement."

From her minister son, the Rev. Fletcher C. Hutcheson, Jr., we hear of the importance of her own family in molding Mary's life. He writes, "My mother comes out of a strong, caring family. My earliest childhood recollections are of the deep ties she has had with her brothers, sisters and parents, that go back to summer gatherings with her family at a rented cottage at Montreat. During later vacations we visited her older brother and his family when he was stationed in Washington, D. C. We lived in Florida and at Thanksgiving we managed to get three families--Mom's younger brother, her sister and their two families, and ourselves, under one roof to celebrate together. Through her family my mother grew up in the church and developed a strong love for it. I admire the love my mother knows and shares with her family. It excites me to see this love continue to grow and nurture as Mom, her sister and younger brother travel across the country to Seattle this summer, to see their older brother.

"I thank God that my sisters and I have been heirs through both Mom and Dad of good values, familial support and encouragement, and love for the people of Jesus Christ which Mom and Dad themselves have known in their families."

The final accolade is from Mary's younger daughter, Lynn Walls. She describes her mother, first of all as a "committed Christian, devoted, loving, and comforting, self-sacrificing. It is in the combination of these attributes in Mom, and many others, that make her the special lady she is to me today. Perhaps the highest compliment I can pay to Mom is to say that she joined with Dad in a total commitment to developing a Christian marriage. Such a commitment required, on her part, the incorporation of all her qualities into the living of every hour and day. In achieving a successful Christian marriage, Mom and Dad have provided me with the greatest benefits of my life, for it was in our home life that I first learned the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Mom and Dad provided an environment where the grace of God was experienced and then encouraged to be shared with others. Mom provided, through the example of her own daily living, the basis from which I was

exposed to the habits, values, attitudes and moral codes which characterize a covenant people. Despite Dad's death, Mom continues to exhibit these same admirable qualities, as she bears her own unique Christian witness to a needy world. I hope and pray that, as I am in the process of building my own Christian marriage, that I can become just like Mom."

These are the words of her children. The writer would like to add two qualities to those they have named, and these are those we all recognize in Mary--they are: modest and unassuming.

How blest Bayside Presbyterian Church is to have one amongst us who so exemplifies the Christian life to those who know her best. We can say with Psalm 115, verse 12, "The Lord has been mindful of us." He has blest us in the lives of Mary and Fletcher Hutcheson. "O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good." Psalm 118:29.

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