

'HOW FAR WE'VE COME'

Martinsville Woman's Club celebrates 125 years of women helping women

By Stephen Crane
MCC

MARTINSVILLE — One hundred and twenty-five years, or put another way, 45,656 days, 1,095,728 hours or 65,743,650 minutes. It's a span that includes six generations, according to retired judge Jane Craney-Weaver, and for the Martinsville Woman's Club, that timespan also represents a long lineage of Martinsville women who took their tutelage into their own hands.

"(This club) is how the vast majority of women educated themselves," Craney-Weaver said Oct. 18, during a celebration honoring the club's 125-year milestone. "Few went to college."

More than 20 current members of the club, along with a few select guests, gathered at the historic Grassyfork Fisheries building on Martinsville's north side for a two-hour "high tea" luncheon and program that detailed the club's storied history that began with six founding members — five married and one not yet wed.

Spurred by the Latin motto "Semper Paratus" — or, always prepared — the Martinsville Woman's Club was a way for local women to continue to learn and stay involved in cultural affairs beyond the duties of the home, a place many women were relegated to soon after marriage.

"How many of you studied the entire works of Shakespeare?" Craney-Weaver asked during her introductory remarks.

The early members of the Martinsville Woman's Club did, along with so much more.

The celebration earlier this month included a number of historical displays, including a collection of bound "Constitution and By-Laws" books dating as far back as 1901 in addition to old meeting minutes, newspaper clippings and historic documents of the club.

The club's current president, Ruth Pelouch, gave the closing remarks, thanking all those who made the elaborate celebration possible, while allowing those in attendance to "appreciate where we've been and how far we've come."



LEFT: Members of the Martinsville Woman's Club in attendance Oct. 18 at the Grassyfork Fisheries building include (front row, from left) Katy Burkhart, Becky Neal, Marilyn Duckworth, Mary Record, Nancy Oberhotzer, (second row, from left) Mary Fox, Sonnie Gano, honorary member Maureen Bray, associate member Lee Sloan, Rosalie Chylaszek, Mary Barco, honorary member Joyce Martin, Barbara Winters, Marilynn Bickley, Patti Cannon, (back row, from left) Judge Jane Craney-Weaver, President Ruth Pelouch, Ginger Voyles, Paula Spencer, Kim Mendenhall, Pam Kelley and Donna Molzon. (Stephen Crane photo / MCC)

Martinsville Woman's Club founders

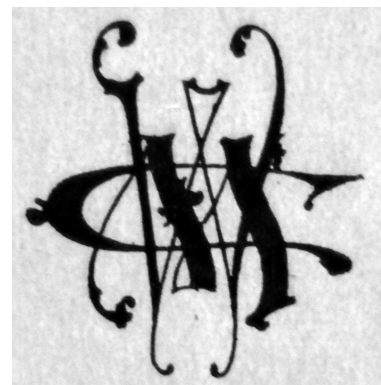
Mrs. Charles S. Huff — 'Alsie'
Mrs. James H. Jordan — 'Emma J.'
Mrs. James V. Mitchell — 'Alice'
Mrs. William C. Mitchell — 'Mary'
Mrs. Tighmann H. Parks — 'Ellen'
Miss Adelaide C. Thomas



ABOVE: Martinsville Woman's Club Historian Mary Fox shows the lengthy scrolled list of past members from the years 1899 to 1949. (Stephen Crane photo / MCC)



From left: Joyce Martin, Maureen Bray and Rodric Bray raise their glasses during a toast honoring the 125th anniversary of the Martinsville Woman's Club while celebrating the milestone at the Grassyfork Fisheries building in Martinsville. (Stephen Crane photo / MCC)



ABOVE: A plaque was made honoring the 125th anniversary of the Martinsville Woman's Club and its six original founders. The plaque — which includes the original gavel used by the group — will be displayed at the county's justice center once construction is completed. (Courtesy photo)

RIGHT: Retired judge and MWC member Jane Craney-Weaver explains the backstory to some of the vintage garments on display at the 125th anniversary celebration Oct. 18. Some of the fashion items included her grandmother's 1920s wedding dress, a Japanese silk dress purchased by her uncle during the Korean War, and a hatbox her aunt used during her world travels. (Stephen Crane photo)



October 1944: World War II at 80

Reaching Germany and advancing toward Japan

By Ronald P. May
MCC Contributor

AACHEN, Germany — As the month of October began, American and British troops had advanced to the door of the Nazi homeland.

Allied Forces reached the German border and began attacking Germany's West Wall on Oct. 2, 1944.

The wall was a defensive line consisting of 18,000 concrete barriers, referred to as "Dragons Teeth." Fortifications, pillboxes, trenches and tank traps were added as well. These were designed to slow any Allied advance from the west.

Built in the late 1930s along Germany's western border with the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, the defensive line extended almost 400 miles from the Netherlands to Switzerland.

The Allies called it the "Siegfried Line," the term taken from Greek mythology's dragon killer.

It temporarily stalled, but did not prevent the Allied armies from advancing into Germany.

The first German city to fall to the advancing Allied Army was Aachen, located on Germany's far western border with Belgium.

The campaign began in mid-September and raged for five weeks before ending in mid-October.

It was one of the largest urban battles fought by U.S. forces in World War II and is still considered to be one of the toughest urban encounters in the entire war.

Much of the city was destroyed during the conflict, and both sides suffered heavy losses.

The city of 160,000 was



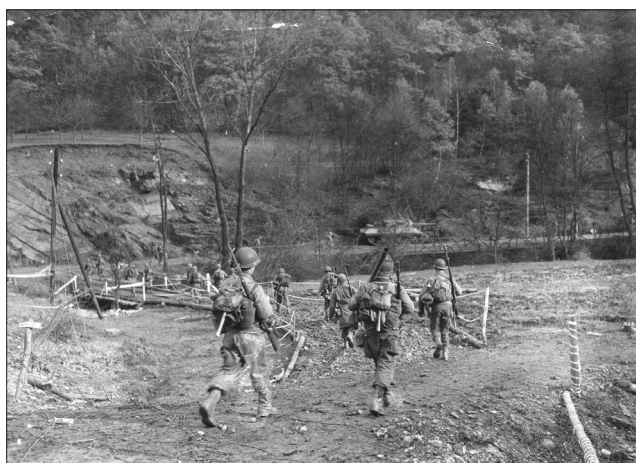
Mention of Pvt. Victor Hammon, whose parents lived in Martinsville, was covered in a dispatch from the Detroit Free Press during the battle for Aachen, Germany which appeared Nov. 21 in the Detroit Free Press.

reduced to rubble. Most inhabitants fled the city, but one thousand residents hid in cellars during the battle. Some 6,000 returned when the battle ended.

By Oct. 21, the city of Aachen, was occupied by the U.S. First Army.

Appearing from among the rubble of a bombed building one day was military policeman Pvt. Victor Hammon, a transplant from Martinsville to Detroit, who was serving with the Army in Aachen.

A Detroit correspondent reported meeting Hammon in a Nov. 21 dispatch for the Detroit Free Press. When asked by the correspondent what the men did during off hours, Hammon stated that they played cards.



American infantrymen move across a bridge deep in the Hurtgen Forest in Germany. (Public Domain photo)

Hurtgen Forest, Germany
Meanwhile, another battle was raging south and east of Aachen in a rugged area called the Hurtgen Forest.

Fought from Sept. 19 until Dec. 16, 1944, the 88-day battle was the longest one for U.S. forces on German land during World War II.

The Hurtgen Forest was a 54-square-mile heavily forested area about 3 miles south and east of the Belgian-German border.

The Allied leaders' goal was to pin down German forces in the area to keep them from reinforcing the front lines farther north involved in the Battle of Aachen.

There were heavy losses of men on both sides of the fight. German casualties were 28,000. Over 33,000 U.S. forces became casualties to injury or death.

Late October saw some significant advances in the Pacific Theater as Army, Navy and Marine Corps forces advanced to the Philippines.

Machinist's Mate second class William Bennett of Martinsville, Ind., was among the Naval forces. He was reported injured on Oct. 18 in a Nov. 2, 1944,

Martinsville Daily Reporter newspaper article.

Bennett had joined the service in the fall of 1943, and in January 1944, he transferred for training with the Naval Demolition Unit in Ft. Pierce, Fla.

In 1942, the Navy established the first Naval Combat Demolition Units. These special units consisting of expert swimmers were created to remove beach obstacles with underwater demolitions to prepare the way for amphibious landings.

It is not known if Bennett was injured while performing underwater demolition, but he did recover from his injuries and survive the war. He spent 15 months in the Pacific Theater.

Pacific Theater

A much awaited and celebrated return to the Philippines took place on Oct. 20 as U.S. forces landed at Leyte.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur walked through the surf, captured in an iconic photo, making good on his promise two and a half years earlier to return to the Philippines.

On March 11, 1942, MacArthur had been hurriedly whisked off the island of Corregidor by ship as Japanese forces closed in



German troops make their way through the smoke and rubble of Aachen during the five-week battle for the German city, which ended in mid-October 1944. (Public Domain photo)

on 120,000 U.S. and Filipino forces holding out on the Bataan peninsula.

They finally surrendered to Japan following the fall of Bataan in April 1942.

Over 21,000 U.S. and Filipino forces were forced on the Bataan Death March toward prisoner-of-war camps 65 miles to the north. Many succumbed to death on the brutal forced march.

While MacArthur and the U.S. Army's return to the Philippines was a moment of fanfare, U.S. forces engaged Japanese forces during the ensuing months in heavy fighting while making their way toward Manila.

Combat in the Philippines would not end until Japan surrendered 10 months later.

Meanwhile, U.S. Naval forces were busy in Leyte Gulf, the body of water in the southeast part of the Philippine islands chain.

The U.S. Third Fleet won a major battle against the Imperial Japanese Navy during the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which commenced on Oct. 23 and ended on Oct. 26.

As the combatant ships

battled on the seas, Navy planes flying off aircraft carriers in the region brought terror and destruction on many Japanese ships during three air engagements that left Japan with the loss of 28 ships, including three battleships and one large aircraft carrier.

The U.S. Navy fared much better with the loss of only one light carrier and three escort carriers, along with some other smaller ships.

East of the Philippine islands, U.S. B-29 Super Fortresses (the Army Air Forces largest bombers) arrived on the island of Tinian in the Marianas.

The Allied bombers were now staged strategically to begin bombing missions on mainland Japan in the coming months.

Next time — November 1944.

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