

Welcome and Acknowledgements.

On behalf of the family; thanks for coming to celebrate the life of Gladys Flakus, — who you may have known as **teacher**, —through church attendance here at **Prince of Peace or St Edwards** in Shelton — through her work at **League of Women Voters—Retired Teachers —American Assn of University Women—Mason County Historical Society** -or perhaps simply as that "**little white haired lady who was always smiling.**"

So I'd like to share some other things about Mom that many did not know—Rest of the Story (Paul Harvey) would often say.

She loved living on Hood Canal —watching the changing seasons, the tides coming in and going out, talking with her friends bird friends—Puttering in her garden, and reading
—But it **teaching** —her **vocation** and her Passion—that defined much of her long and remarkable life. So we'll kind of go over her life almost like a history lesson that will help explain her love of teaching.

Beginning - Neilsville, WI

—first few years she lived a comfortable, middle class life, but then things changed.

The Trek

Her Father Philetus —"Lete"- had chronic **asthma** and began a search for a more favorable climate. Mom was about seven at the time. Aunt **Faye** told me she believed he just had **Wanderlust**. Moved to **Missouri** for a year or so-then to **Newburg, Oregon** for a few months. Mom loved Newburg—happiest time of her childhood. Too wet for dad!! Lewis & Clark could have told him that. Then **back to the east**; a trip covering **two years** with a few stays in Montana. Father had cattle and prized bulls, moved by train, each **move cost!** Last leg of this trip was made in a **covered wagon**.

Settled in Mission SD

After all the traveling the family did settle down in Mission SD, a farming community located in the South Western part of the state near the **Black Hills**. Finally some stability in her life. In 1928, Mom graduated HS-Valedictorian~in the summer she started college in **Spearfish, SD**, then in the fall taught school on **Rosebud** Indian Reservation near **Pine Ridge** (Lakota Sioux, Custer, Sitting Bull, Chief Crazy Horse) near the Black Hills in SD. Things are **looking pretty rosy**; job, college, OK. Well about as rosy as it got without running water, indoor plumbing, electricity, few if any paved streets in farming community of about 200. But, they had dances where her father played fiddle and sis Faye played the banjo.

Then the trouble begins.

1929, Black Friday and the Stock Market Crash, the **Great Depression**, which **lasted ten years; stocks lost 80%** of value, **44% of banks** failed, **54% drop** in GDP, **25-30%**

unemployment rate. Paid by **warrants**, but merchants would discount them heavily.

Can't get any worse? Wrong. **Dust Bowl-- eight year drought** in the southern plain states started in 1931 and lasted till 1939--in '34 & '35 the drought covered 75% of the county in 27 states. **Clouds of dust** from Dakotas to Texas. Think **Grapes of Wrath?**

On New Years day in **1934, her father dies at 57**. Before **Social Security**, so Eva took in washing to make ends meet.

Some good news. **Married Rudy 'RJ' Flakus in December of 1934**. Merlyn born in November. Depression still going, RJ worked in CCC, six bucks a week.

More good news. **Escape from the dust bowl**. In 1938, they got word from friends there was work in Randle, WA. Mom **packed that day** she got the news and they **headed West next day**. She still **remembered Newburg**. Merlyn and all their belongings in a **little Dodge Coupe**. Broke but not bent, arrive in Randle. Rod born in 1938, Rich in 1940. Things looking rosier.

Prosperity

Depression and Dust bowl both end in 1939 and everyone's working! War gong on in Europe and USA supplying materal and equipment.

During the war years, both Gladys and Rudy worked in the Kaiser ship yards in Vancouver, WA. Mom was a burner/welder. She since she was so small, they'd send her and her torch down deep in the hulls o work in tight quarters where the men had trouble maneuvering.

Back to college

After the WWII, in 1946 the family moved to Bellingham where Mom went to WWU and received her **degree in 1950**. In 1951, we moved to Shelton where she **continued her teaching career 33 years** after she first began. Ironically, she resumed her career on another Indian Reservation, this one in **Skokomish Valley**, and she often said her happiest years teaching was at the Skok Valley school. She also **learned to drive at that time**, well at least got a drivers license. She taught at Skok Valley for **three years** then at Evergreen and later Mountain View elementary schools, both in Shelton. She retired to her home on Hood Canal in 1972 but continued to follow the lives of her students for years and stayed active in the church, League of Women Voters, AAUW, and Retired Teachers Assn for some time.

She experienced two world wars, and campaigns in Korea, Viet Nam, the cold war and Afganistan and Iraq. She outlasted revolution and Communist experiment in Russia. In the field of transportation, her lifetime saw advent of automobiles, freeways, commercial air flight, bullet trains and space flight. In the area of communications, she was born before radios, telephones, television, computers, cell phones and the internet were widely available. Conveniences that we take for granted were not available during her childhood; electricity, refrigerators, washers/dryers, indoor plumbing, super markets. Imagine living without fast food or the corner 7/11.