



RESIDENT OF THE MONTH

Dorothy Jerse

Dorothy Jerse was born in Chicago, IL, the only child of Louis Arthur Weinz and Ruby Reckner Weinz. Two years later the family “went suburban” and moved to Des Plaines. The household included her parents, aunt and uncle, and her mother’s school-age brother. Following the stock market crash in October 1929, the average family income dropped 40 percent between 1929 and 1940 nationwide. Dorothy grew up in the Great Depression of the 1930s. She attended local schools, graduating from Maine Township High School in 1944. She is proud to know Hillary Clinton is also a Maine graduate. After high school, Dorothy enrolled in the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana campus). It was there she met Bill Jerse, a returning WWII veteran. Married in 1947, the marriage lasted 70 happy years. Their four children now live in Washington State, New Mexico, Maryland, and Michigan. The six grandchildren and one great grandchild are scattered in six states. Perhaps living in several places came through Dorothy and Bill’s many moves. Starting out in a small mining town in Illinois, they moved to Madison, WI for graduate work, then to Kalamazoo, MI. Following their passion for “living west,” their next locations were Greeley, CO, Flagstaff, AR, and Santa Rose, CA. Then in 1964, it was back to the Midwest. Terre Haute became home when Bill became a faculty member at ISU. And it was here where Dorothy finally finished her college degree at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in 1975.

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Bill and Dorothy built their house in Rea Park and lived there until they made their move to WV in December of 2015. Dorothy's first job was working as an assistant Welcome Wagon hostess calling on mothers of newborn infants for two years. The job barely paid car expense but it was an important education for Dorothy. She learned every area of TH and met with women of all classes and backgrounds. From there she moved downtown to the old YMCA to work with girls and teens. She left the YW to be the curator of the Vigo Co. Historical Society Museum, and later became the ED of the YMCA, until 1990. In the meantime, she was a co-owner of the Bridal Cottage.

Dorothy always enjoyed writing, and she contributed columns to the Tribune-Star and the TH Living magazine for many years. She is also the author or co-author of seven local history books published between 1983 and 2015. However, life was not all work. She and Bill loved to dance, and they were active at the German Oberlander Club. She collects old valentines which led to the board of the National Valentine Collectors Assn and more than 100 talks in IN and IL. Her awards include More Saga of the Wabash (Gov. Evan Bayh), History Maker (Vigo Co. Historical Society) and the Distinguished Alumni Award (Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College).

Dorothy says Westminster Village was a natural for them. It was located in their Rea Park neighborhood, and she was already aware of the interesting programs presented and the beautiful grounds. Since Dorothy's move, a number of staff have become her friends. Now that she is 97, she often thinks back to 1998 and 1999 when she was the chair of the Vigo Co. Public Library's "Celebrate the Century" program. Dorothy says, "...maybe it is time for me to plan my own century celebration coming in 2026." She says, "If I make it, I can't think of a better place to do it than at Westminster Village!"