



Regina "Polly" Shannahan

February 3, 1917 - February 4, 2010

Regina Flanigan "Polly" Shannahan, for decades a prominent Talbot County historic preservationist and voice for mental health treatment, passed away Thursday, a day after her 93rd birthday.

Shannahan was born to John Leo Flanigan and Mary Eleanore von Hagel Flanigan in Baltimore on Feb. 3, 1917. She moved to the Eastern Shore with her late husband, Talbot County native John Graham Shannahan Jr., following World War II, and played an important role in preserving historic structures and advocating for mental health services ever since.

Shannahan began sailing small boats at the age of 10. While originally from Baltimore, she spent her childhood summers on Gibson Island.

Not long after she earned her bachelors degree in history and political science from Trinity College in Washington, D.C., and while serving as executive director of the Prince George's County Girl Scouts, she was recruited by the Navy as a WAVE (Women's Reserve of the United States Naval Reserve). Just months after Congress passed a bill allowing women into the armed services, Shannahan was hired as the first female military officer in the state. She left after becoming pregnant with her first child in 1944 (as required by law), and moved to the Shore with John, whose family first arrived here in the late 1600s.

She became a longtime member of the Talbot County Garden Club, the Talbot County Historical Trust, the Talbot County Mental Health Board and Historic Easton. Starting with the garden club, she was instrumental in the survival of

several buildings of historical note in Easton.

Her first major victory in local preservation battles was over the old McCrory's store on Washington Street. She later helped preserve the James Neall House, the Myrtle Grove manor house and plantation and the old Talbot County jail, among other historic structures. Her most recent victory came just last year, as she successfully fought to save 925 Port St., one of the earliest buildings in Easton.

Last May, she was recognized by the Maryland Historical Trust at an awards ceremony in Baltimore, and in August she received Maryland House of Delegates and Senate resolutions along with a citation from Gov. Martin O'Malley praising her for her preservation work.

In 2007, she was honored with a Lifetime Service Award by the Mental Health Association of Maryland. For years, she volunteered for the Mental Health Association in Talbot County, served on committees working to pass progressive mental health legislation, worked to develop the Upper Shore Mental Health Center and was a volunteer patient advocate at Eastern Shore Hospital Center in Cambridge.

Eleanor Shannahan, one of Polly's daughters, said the garden club put pressure on local merchants and did the first historic preservation work in Easton.

"It was really quite a deal back then, because it wasn't as trendy as it is now," she said.

"She loved Easton," Eleanor Shannahan said. "Easton is really a treasure and it's there because a whole bunch of ladies got together and decided they wanted to keep this treasure. It just goes to show individuals can really make a difference if they stand up for it."

Shelby Mitchell, president of Historic Easton, said "Polly did more to preserve the town of Easton and make it what it is today than any single individual," remaining active and always full of suggestions even after she could no longer attend board meetings.

Talbot County Historical Society Curator Beth Hansen said Shannahan

remained active with that organization as well, being named a director emeritus of the board of directors.

"She was a major supporter of the historical society over the years," Hansen said. "She was just one of those people you could always count on to keep supporting organizations."

Pete Leshar, the curator at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, worked with Shannahan at various historic organizations.

"Polly was a driver. Polly was always the voice out there for the historic community," Leshar said. "She helped to drive home the importance of saving a number of structures."

As for mental health, Eleanor Shannahan said there was very little support for it when her mother got started. She first got people to listen by feeding them her famous roast beef, she said.

Tina Mills, director of the Mental Health Association of Talbot County, said Shannahan worked very hard to get mental illnesses treated like other illnesses. State and national laws are now in place putting mental diseases on equal footing.

"She felt that mental health patients deserved the same opportunities as (patients of) any other disease," Mills said.

"She was active and vibrant until the very end. Young people couldn't keep up with her," said Mills, who also worked with Shannahan on the Talbot County Historical Trust. "I think the most outstanding thing about her was her memory. She remembered everything."

At the end of her life, Shannahan moved to the Shireton Condominiums on Dover Street, coincidentally across from the site where Shannahan and her husband first stayed on the Eastern Shore before moving to Oxford (what's now the Inn at 202 Dover).

Shannahan is survived by six children; Mary Carol Shannahan, Eleanor Norris Shannahan, John Graham Shannahan III, Mollie Shannahan MacAdams, Norris Edward Shannahan and Patrick Flanigan Shannahan; 15

grandchildren, Obrad Milutinovich, Kathleen Gregory, Brendan Gregory, Anne Strzegowski, Arthur L. MacAdams IV, Patrick MacAdams, Scott MacAdams, Brittany C. Shannahan, John Graham Shannahan IV, Reilly Shannahan, Norris E. Shannahan Jr., Robert Cameron, Madison Shannahan, Patrick F. Shannahan Jr. and Mallory Shannahan; six great-grandchildren, Andrew Milutinovich, Alexander Milutinovich, Maxwell Milutinovich, Natalie Gregory, Tyler Gregory and Haley MacAdams; and five nieces and five nephews.

"She was an awesome mother, she never stopped being a mother right up to the very last minute," Mollie MacAdams said.

Visitation will be held from 2 to 6 p.m. on Friday at Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam Funeral Home, P.A., Easton. The funeral will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, with burial to follow in Oxford Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Historic Easton Inc., P.O. Box 1071, Easton, MD 21601, or to the Mental Health Association of Talbot County, 611B Dutchmans Lane, Easton, MD 21601.

Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home, P.A.
200 South Harrison Street
Easton, MD 21601
410-822-3131

Tribute Wall



“ *Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Regina "Polly" Shannahan*



Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - February 04, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ *Regina "Polly" Shannahan*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *Regina "Polly" Shannahan*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Regina "Polly" Shannahan*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM



“ Hi Beebe--just discovered this obituary and wanted to send my condolences.

God bless.

Your old classmate Julie##imported-begin##Julie##imported-end##

March 29, 2010 at 07:04 PM



“ I would like to express my deepest sympathies to the family in the loss of their loved one. John 5:28,29##imported-begin##Delores Allen ##imported-end##

February 11, 2010 at 04:51 PM

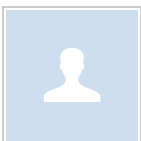


“ I have always had the deepest respect and admiration for Polly and all she did not only for the community but also for my mother. Sorry that I will not be able to make the service to honor her.

Sincerely,

John Dudley Sullivan##imported-begin##John##imported-end##

February 07, 2010 at 12:31 PM



“ To the family of Regina Shannahan I would like to express my deepest sympathy in the loss of their loved one. May the fond memories shared with her and resurrection hope Jesus spoke about in the Bible at John 5:28,29 be of comfort during this time of grief and pain.##imported-begin##Delores##imported-end##

February 07, 2010 at 08:42 AM