She Likes a Challenge

Frances Redmond Jasper celebrates 100 years—a century-long lifetime of overcoming adversity and witnessing change.

Just weeks before her 100th birthday, Frances Redmond Jasper plays the old hymn “In the Garden” on the upright piano in her apartment, where she lives alone. Long, well-manicured fingers find all the right notes, and a big smile brightens her face. “I’m passionate about music,” she says, adding that she’s recently taken up the violin. “I’ve had four lessons already.”

A Haddonfield, N.J., native, Frances likes trying new things. In fact, she attributes her longevity to “a thirst for learning,” along with daily gratitude and faith in God. Twice married and twice widowed, she moved to Independence Hill Retirement Resort Community in San Antonio to be near her daughter, her son-in-law, and two granddaughters. She’s enjoyed singing with the Hill Toppers Chorus and welcomed new residents as part of the Meet and Greet Committee.

Frances surrounds herself with relics of her 60 years in Washington, D.C., where she worked in the U.S. Dept. of War, the Pentagon, the U.S. Dept. of State and the U.S. Dept. of Justice as a typist and stenographer. Photos of John F. Kennedy hang near a signed photo of Bill Clinton and another of Hillary Clinton. She also has the framed signatures of former officemates on the seal of U.S. Dept. of Justice, where she witnessed and had a hand in history during the Nixon years.

She joined colleagues to congratulate William Rehnquist the day he was named to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1971— his kiss on her cheek captured by a national newspaper photographer. And she took dictation for legal papers related to the Watergate scandal, too.

She watched the Civil Rights movement unfold from the heart of D.C. in the 1960s, but she had already asserted her rights in the workplace in 1943. When superiors at the Pentagon told her Black women couldn’t take stenography courses there, she learned shorthand anyway. “[They said] a typist was as far as I could go,” she says. “I wasn’t insulted. I saw it as a challenge.” From her Shiloh Baptist Church balcony, she practiced stenography skills on the pastor’s sermons. “I couldn’t wait to get home and transcribe,” she says. And a stenographer she became. She even worked beyond retirement as a temporary secretary until 1985.

Frances applied her skills in many different capacities of leadership in her church and community. “I’ve had a wonderful life,” she says. “I’ve enjoyed every challenge.”

Did you know that there are VA Benefits that can help offset the cost of living in a retirement community or assisted living?

Attend an informational session on the Veteran’s Aid & Assistance Benefit Program at Independence Hill.

Tuesday, March 22, 2016
10:00am
20500 Huebner Road
San Antonio, Texas 78258
RSVP to (210) 764-5260 by March 21st
Refreshments Served

Celebrating her 100th birthday on Feb. 26th, 2016, Frances Redmond Jasper enjoys life at Independence Hill.