



A treasured elder...

Hope Brewster Ely Cochran

The U.S Army has been her family for almost 89 years

Treasure
Our
Elders

You can tell the moment you enter Hope Cochran's private room at Hawthorne Health & Rehab Center in Brandon that she is a woman of refinement and elegant style. Artwork collected from all over the world adorns her walls and mementos of family and a life of travel are practically everywhere. She's seated in front of a computer screen when the Treasure Our Elders interviewer arrives. "Did you collect these when you were a young girl?" the interviewer asks, pointing to the huge doll house furnished in exquisite detail. "I collected those when I was an old girl," Cochran laughs. Beneath her refined manner and easy warmth is a tough-as-nails Army wife, mapmaker and former World War II armaments tester. Really.

Military family

Cochran was born Hope Brewster Ely on March 24, 1919 to a family whose ancestors included Florida's first elected governor, William D. Moseley, and Nathaniel Ely, a founder of Hartford, Connecticut in 1638. Her father taught advanced mathematics at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he had graduated, Class of '17. Throughout her early life, Cochran's father would often be on loan to various research labs and was part of groundbreaking work in the development of radar and sound recording for motion pictures.

"He built what he called his 'dead room' at Bell Labs," Cochran remembers of the almost perfectly soundproof and echoless (acoustically "dead") room used for early sonic experiments. "Helen Keller once visited and said it was the 'quietest' place she had ever been."

When Cochran's father was detailed to Russia shortly after she was born, the family stayed behind at West Point. It took Cochran's mother's personal request to Douglas MacArthur (Class of '03, and then the new West Point Superintendent) before the young family could travel to France for an extended visit. A stay on the French Riviera followed, the first of many such foreign postings she would know during her life. Soon the family was back home in Rutherford, New Jersey where Cochran was surrounded by dozens of aunts, uncles and cousins. A series of private girls' schools and boarding schools followed, and at age 16, Cochran was



Class Act: West Point cadets offer the traditional wedding salute for Harrington and Hope Cochran on their wedding day in 1945. "I have had a full and rich life — no miseries at all."

studying in Switzerland and France and becoming fluent in French (she worked briefly as a translator at the famous Le Cordon Bleu culinary school in Paris). Upon her return home the next year, Cochran was diagnosed with an ovarian tumor and had to undergo life-risking surgery in the days before antibiotics were available.

Marriage, children

In college Cochran studied art and interior design. Both skills came in handy later when she was hired by the Army Air Force to draw topographic maps for allied bombers. She also was part of an all-woman team that worked at a field branch of the Frankford Arsenal measuring gun recoil from various load sizes and formulations.



Cochran met future husband Harrington* (West Point, Class of '41) at a "Camp Illumination" dance and they were married in 1945 as World War II neared an end. Like her father, Harrington was an engineer and West Point faculty member who was also to serve in the Army Corps of Engineers during his distinguished 32-year career, retiring a full Colonel. The couple was married nearly 50 years and had raised two children when he died in 1994.

Administrator Vern Zeger knocks on the door to ask how things are going and if he can bring any refreshments. "I like him," Cochran whispers, returning to a story about being stationed on Okinawa during the typhoon season. "They said it was a 'typhoon-proof' house, but when it rained sideways the water squirted in through the walls." Postings followed on almost every continent. "We weren't coddled," Cochran says of herself and other Army officers' wives in her matter-of-fact way. "There were many times when we were without our husbands, but we were expected to maintain ourselves and support them in their mission. We had a duty too."

Home in Florida

Cochran admitted she had never heard of Tampa, Florida when they arrived at MacDill Air Force Base in 1969, shortly after Hurricane Camille had passed through. "Everything was a mess. They gave us \$180 a month housing allowance and said 'good luck.'" They settled in the fashionable Culbreath Isles area of the city and soon purchased a 39-foot boat for many long pleasure trips, including one to Tahiti. It took a recurrence of cancer, a heart attack, macular degeneration, Parkinson's and a leg fracture to eventually slow her non-stop post-retirement travel. Cochran and her daughter screened 33 nursing homes before choosing her spacious room at Hawthorne Health & Rehab about a year ago. She gives the staff high marks for the job they do and for making her feel comfortable. "I'm spoiled rotten here."

FHCA honors Hope Brewster Ely Cochran and treasures her many contributions to our state and nation.

(* Harrington Cochran's cadet photo is seen on page 1.)