

Memories: An Interview with Mary Abrams By Dawn Russell



Mary Jane Abrams was born on November 6, 1956. Her parents are June Wheaton Abrams and Elwood Abrams. Mary has three siblings: brothers Richard and William and a sister Carol. Mary has lived her whole life in the town of Walworth. She grew up on a farm at 150 Daansen Road, Walworth. Mary's mother worked at the Marion Canning Factory and was a homemaker. Her father was employed at Garlock in Palmyra on the night shift and worked his 24-acre pig farm during the day. The pig farm had an average of 200 pigs at any given time. Mary was her dad's right-hand helper after her brothers left home. She did many chores from the time she was able to help but she didn't mind it as it was just the way. She remembers running through fields with her brothers to pick raspberries. Mary's Aunt Patty was a big part of her life. Mary was an advocate for her aunt due to her disability. Sue Daansen, a neighbor friend, taught Mary how to sew and crochet.

Her first babysitting job was for Kay Aman's children. They became so attached to Mary they would call her mom. Mary remembers a certain babysitting job she had taking care of four children for a whole week. She earned \$20.00, just enough to take a friend and herself to the Wayne County Fair.

At age 13, Mary joined a 4-H group called the Lucky Strikes, later known as the West Wayne 4-H ers. Les Hall and Abby Sauer were her leaders. Abby was an influence on Mary and also taught her how to make homemade bread. Mary has been very active in 4-H ever since. She has been a leader for 40 years and involved for 47 years (**bottom left photo**). She also has worked the dairy booth at the Wayne County Fair for the 4-H scholarship fund, this being her 25th year. In 2014 Mary received the highest honor given, Executive Director's Certificate of Appreciation, for her years of dedication and service to 4-H. Her passion is strong for helping the children. Mary said she always wanted children of her own and this is her way by helping others.



Growing up in Walworth, she has good memories of the firemen's auctions and the street dances. Her best friend was Jean Joslyn. They used to say to one another "We are going to get old but we are never going to grow up." Mary graduated from Wayne Central High School in 1974. She attended Monroe Community College and received a degree in accounting. She worked for the Paul T. Freund Company for 14 years.

After taking the Civil Service exam, Mary was hired on April 19, 1990, as a developmental aide for the Newark Developmental Center, later called Finger Lakes DDSO. In 2004, while working, Mary went to school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. She continued working for the Finger Lakes DDSO in this capacity until 2015 when she retired. Mary would often babysit for the children of the Palmyra Volunteer Ambulance workers. While doing this, she was approached about joining their organization.

Instead, she decided to join the Walworth Fire Department in 1987. Within the year, she became a certified Emergency Medical Technician. In 1998 Mary was awarded Fireman of the Year for her outstanding and dedicated service. She has been with her hometown fire department for almost 30 years (**top left photo**).

Mary is a long-time member of the Second Baptist Church of Walworth. Bill Wemple was her Sunday School teacher and he was like an extra parent to her. While attending this church, she has filled capacities such as treasurer, deacon and Sunday School teacher.

Since Mary's retirement in 2015, she is still very active in the Walworth community. She volunteers at the Walworth Historical Society's museum, serves on the Board of Directors for Cornell Cooperative Extension, and volunteers for 4-H. In addition, she is a long-time member of the Walworth Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary.

Mary is a very giving person to others and her community. She loves living in Walworth; she says it gives her the feeling of family.