

The Mary E. Norem and Hattie Warnke Fund

Mary Elnora (Warnke) Norem was a respected and loved wife, sister, and mother. She was born in November 18, 1924 in Starke County, where she would stay and establish her own large family.

Mary attended primary and secondary school at the Center Township School. Upon graduation, she went on to attend Manchester University for two years. She married her husband, Clyde William Norem on August 15, 1945.

Over the years, Clyde and Mary had eight sons: Clyde William Norem, Jr., Glen Norem, John Norem, Arthur Norem, James "Jim" Norem, Richard "Dick" Norem, Thomas Norem, and Howard Norem.

After having her seventh child, Mary began working for the Dan Roscka family who owned General Woodworker, a factory in Knox. She retired in 1989 at age 66.

Mary, a woman of many talents, particularly enjoyed tending to her large garden, which, in addition to enjoyment, provided food for her large family. All of the children had chores, and helping their mother tend to the garden was chief among them.

After Mary's husband Clyde passed away from pancreatic cancer, she did not lose her strong spirit nor her optimistic attitude. No matter what the circumstances were, Mary's sons agreed that she always put everyone else before herself and stayed serene, dignified, and worked tirelessly.

One person who helped Mary greatly was her aunt, Hattie Augusta Warnke—Mary's father's oldest full sister. Hattie was born on January 9, 1891 in Brems, Indiana. With her parents having recently immigrated from Germany, only German was spoken in the Warnke household.

Hattie helped raise and care for Mary, her brother Randall, and sister Mina from the time they were young due to Mary's mother's health problems. Hattie also assisted her parents until her father's



Front Row, left to right: Jim, Howard, Clyde, Mary, and Tom.
Back Row, left to right: Art, John, Glen, Bill, and Dick.
A photo the Norem Family in 1968.

death in 1927 and her mother's death in 1935. After Mary married and began her own family, Hattie greatly assisted with helping raise Mary's eight sons. Hattie was remembered by her great nephews as being kind-hearted, nurturing, and supportive, but stern when she needed to be. They have often said that if everyone had a person like Aunt Hattie in their life, it would be a much better world. She made tough, difficult situations much more bearable. Since she devoted her life helping others, she never had a chance to marry herself.

Education was always emphasized by both Hattie Warnke and Mary Norem. Hattie attended school in Brems without the ability to speak English, but that did not detour Hattie from the desire to learn. When Otto, Mary's father, became the head of the house upon the death of his father, he forbade any of the household to speak any German, in or out of the house.

In addition to being her parents' caregiver when they grew older, helping raise her brothers' children, and helping Mary with her eight sons, she ran her own business. She opened the Brems Hatchery in the 1920s, using the railroad to deliver the chicks and the *Prairie Farmer's* paper to advertise. The closing of the railroad depot in Brems first, and then the closing of the railroad depot in Knox, caused her to close the hatchery in the early 1960s.

The Mary E. Norem and Hattie Warnke Fund was created to benefit the Davis Wesleyan Church, which is located near Davis Township, on the banks of the Kankakee River. John established the fund on December 18, 2002. This designated fund benefits the Davis Wesleyan Church because it was his mother's most cherished place, her home away from home. John remembers that she went to church at least twice and sometimes three times every week. Her strong belief in God and Jesus Christ was her foundation. In fact, their family helped to build the church along with their neighbors. Through this fund, the story of Mary and Hattie's strength, inspiration, and serenity will live on forever.