

Remembering Virginia Frank

Virginia Snider married Jim Frank in 1944, a year that marked a transition for her from one world to another very different from what she had known. Virginia grew up in rural West Virginia. Photographs and stories from those times reveal just what you would expect - very little money, very little education, and a burning desire to get away and find something better. Her father had abandoned their little family when she was not yet ten, and her mother was a schoolteacher, so there would never be money. Her ticket out would be education. She studied and worked and found a way to go to college. Her personal yardstick became education for those she would meet, the man she would marry, and the children she would raise.

After marrying Jim Frank, her first job was to get him through college. His chosen path - an officer in the Air Force - required it. The result was that Virginia became an Air Force pilot's wife. This meant frequent relocation and few long-term relationships - quite a difference from growing up where families knew each other for generations.



Her children were with her, though, and we became her most fervent cause. We knew what was expected, that grades were the currency of approval. Her oldest son attained his PhD. I have an MBA and a Masters in Education. Her daughter is pursuing a career in veterinary medicine. If Mother were alive today, I would argue that education did not prove to be any measure of success. However it was the central theme while we grew up, and it kept her focused those many years and many Air Force bases as Jim Frank pursued his career.

Virginia never did get many of those things she might have wished for when she dreamed on that big front porch swing as a young girl in Mason, West Virginia, but in the end I believe she felt she had been successful. Though the path was tumultuous, I believe she more than approved of the outcome. Virginia died of cancer at an early age, as did her husband, Jim. She cared very much about her children in the ways she knew and thought best. We understand this now and appreciate it more as we grow in age and wisdom ourselves.