

The following was written by Robert Redinger, son of Rachel Redinger.

Rachel Redinger

Several years ago, when our father died, my sister and I were discussing our father's accomplishments and contributions to his community. We had just read his obituary and were wondering what we would put in the paper when mother passed away. We decided that the headline "Rachel Died" was all that would be needed. No details. Nothing else. Just those simple words and everyone would know and remember in their own way. Well, yesterday afternoon, Rachel died.

During her life, Rachel accomplished great things and received much recognition, including:

1973 – Ohio Governor's Travel Award

1979 – The Puppeteers of America Trustees Award

1980 – The Ohio Theatre Alliance Award

1982 – The Ohio Travel Council Paul J. Sherlock Award

1987 – The Grace Lutheran Church Founder's Service Medal and "The Broken Plate Award"

1987 – The Golden Rose Award of the Tuscarawas Valley Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association

1991 – The Zeisberger/Heckewelder Memorial Award from the Tuscarawas County Historical Society

1995 – The Ohio Humanities Council Distinguished Service Award

1996 – Kent State University Medallion

In 1979, she was inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame.

Although she enjoyed recognition, it was something she never courted. She was always concerned for what she could do for the group/activity she was currently involved with. Of all the recognitions, I think her proudest moment came five or six years ago when a young girl (show name I no longer remember) from Dover Middle School called mom and asked if she could interview her for her school class. Mom, although somewhat surprised at the request, agreed. When the interview was over, she asked the girl why she wanted to interview her and the girl told her that they were supposed to interview someone famous and Rachel was the only person she knew who was mentioned in her Ohio history book. That made mother's day, and year, and life.

Born September 12, 1920 of Robert R. and Hazel Hickman Bair in Winfield, Ohio, she grew up in Bolivar and graduated Bolivar High School in 1937. She attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Wittenberg College, and the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Married to the late M. Paul Redinger for 48 years, she is survived by daughter, Robyn Redinger and John Critzer of New Haven, CT, four sons, Bob and Helen Redinger of Bolivar, OH, Kevin and Barb Redinger of Dublin, OH, Kerry and Kathy Redinger of Holmdel, NJ, and Garth Redinger of Lewis Center, OH; and eight grandchildren: Kai, Kari, Dane, Kira, Mike, MacKenzie, Matthew, and Allen.

Ever interested in theater, Rachel was an active member of the Little Theater of Tuscarawas County for more than 10 years directing such plays as “Bell, Book and Candle”, “The Caine Mutiny Court Marshall”, “Death of a Salesman” and “Music Man”. She was also an admission audition interviewer for the New York Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Rachel founded the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association in 1965 and was the founder of Paul Green’s “Trumpet in the Land”, Ohio’s first outdoor drama. She oversaw the construction of the outdoor theater in New Philadelphia and produced the first several years of “Trumpet in the Land”. She continued to serve OHDA until 1997 in many different capacities.

Rachel was Executive Director of the Delaware Indian Heritage Committee from 1984-1999 and was the driving force behind the incorporation of the Delaware Nation Grand Council of North America in Ohio in 1992 which reunited all the Delaware Indian tribes throughout the United States and Canada into one Nation. She served as an Ohio Humanities Council Project Director for 8 years sponsoring 5 symposia including “The First Delaware Indian Cultural Exchange”. She was also a Vice Chair of the Ohio Arts Council from 1973-1978.

She was very active in puppetry for over 40 years and was Director of Education and Media Development for the Puppeteers of America from 1970-1979. She was also an active member of Union Internationale de la Marionette. Counted among her many puppet friends were Kermit (Jim Henson), Big Bird (Carol Spinney) and many of the muppets (Frank Oz).

Rachel served as a consultant to the Ohio Travel Council for 12 years and to the Buckeye Travel Council for 12 years. During that time she was one of the organizers of the Tuscarawas Valley Tourist Association. She also served as the Ohio representative for the Appalachian Regional Commission to the ARC Cultural Committee in Washington D.C. During that time she was responsible for several movies being shot in Tuscarawas County, including James Michner’s made for tv serial, “Centennial”.

She had strong affiliations with Kent State University. She was on the College of Fine and Professional Arts Advisory Board, was a charter and honorary member of the Chestnut Society, and she was a driving force for the establishment of the Shannon Rodgers – Jerry Silverman Fashion Museum and was a Honorary Advisory Board member for the School of Fashion Design and Marketing.

Rachel was extremely active in Grace Lutheran Church in Dover, serving in a variety of stewardships. Most recently she was secretary for the Planning Council and Congregational meetings and served as the Director for the Church’s Board of Public Relations. During the last several years she became very active in the Zoar Doll Club.

I know she was greatly involved in her community at the local, state and national level, and I know she had a tremendous impact on the lives of lots of people, but she was, above all else, out mother and we will miss her dearly.

Robert Redinger (and Robyn, Kevin, Kerry and Garth)