

### Mabel Blacketor - By Ann Allen

When it was announced that the late Mabel Blacketor had left the majority of her estate to the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, Inc. for the benefit of Fulton County few were surprised.

Specifically, the bequest benefits Woodlawn Hospital, the First Baptist Church, establishes a scholarship in the name of Mabel's son, the late Brent Blacketor, and establishes the Mabel Blacketor Memorial Operating Endowment Fund. "It's the largest gift ever made to the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, Inc." said Director Terri Johnson.

Mrs. Blacketor, who died January 24, 2009 at the age of 93, already had a long record of giving – 25 acres of land to establish the Brent Blacketor Memorial Sports Complex, land for the expansion of the Mill Creek Golf Course for which the entrance was named Brent Blacketor Drive, the first \$5,000 for the Fulton County 4-H Fund and dozens of smaller, often unknown gifts to her community.



"Mabel Blacketor was a gracious, intelligent and perceptive lady", said Robert Peterson, her employer for many years. As a descendant of local historic families, she was widely acquainted and had a host of friends. Her integrity, character and friendship were characteristics deeply appreciated by Robert as she served as his Deputy County Auditor and as secretary and office manager for his law firm.

"She felt it was important to give to others," said Karin Fowler, who worked with Mabel at Peterson and Waggoner law office. "She'd say, every day, you find something to do for someone, I've never forgotten that".

The death of her only son in a horrific 1959 accident was a crushing blow for Mabel and her husband, the late Kline Blacketor Jr., but they continued to be active in the community. Still, his memory was ever-present. Mabel especially loved children and her community gifts often were made with them in mind.

"I used to date Brent in high school", Sandy Sawyer said. "There were always a lot of kids at their house, and she was always so gracious and kind. Years later, after I'd married Jack Sawyer and we had our first son, Mabel came to the hospital to see me. The first thing she said was, have another baby as soon as you can. Don't raise this one as an only child. She didn't have to say anything else. I knew what she was thinking".

But she didn't become morose. "Whenever we had clients come into the office to settle an estate, Mabel would admonish us not to get emotionally attached", Fowler recalled. "She'd tell us to remember what the client was there for".

Over the years, Mabel worked many jobs in the community, in addition to serving as Deputy County Auditor for Robert Peterson, she worked in the business offices of Dr. Howard Rowe and Woodlawn Hospital and,

finally, for 31 years, as secretary and office manager for Peterson Law Firm, later Peterson and Waggoner. "She was a gem to work with", Fowler said.

Widowed in 1983, service to the community became her primary focus. Mabel traveled to Illinois in 1993 to assist the First Baptist Church group in cleaning up a river town after the flood. In 1998 she traveled as an advisor of the Senior High Youth group to work on a project at an Indian Mission in Arizona. She served as marshal for the Round Barn Festival, received the 1999 Community Service Award from the Rochester and Lake Manitou Chamber of Commerce, had been a 4-H leader to the Rainbow Girls, was a motivator for the Rochester Pathways Project, a 12-year member of the Woodlawn Hospital Board of Trustees and one of the original service committee members of the Fulton County Community Foundation. Undaunted by hard work, she embraced new ideas, startling friends by going hang-gliding as an 84th birthday present to herself.

Always slim and trim, thanks in part to walking five miles a day, she exuded femininity. "I can still see her coming to our 4-H club 65 years ago to show us how to model in the dress revue", said Joanne Newcomb Bendall. "She was wearing a blue and white striped chambray dress and she was lovely. She was the perfect role model for all of us".

That carried into her working relationships as well. "Birthdays at the law office were special", said Fowler. "Instead of cake we always had one of Susie Carter's pies, which were wonderful all by themselves. Mabel made the occasion even more festive by insisting on bringing in her good china and silver. She liked things to be done right".

Kate Haworth got to know Mabel through work. She prepared her taxes for over 20 years. In that time they developed a mutual friendship and trust. Every Christmas, Mabel would fly into the office with a smile and a large box of Fannie Mae candy for the staff to enjoy. She never ceased to amaze us with her style and cheer. Later in her life, she asked if Kate would take over her finances. Kate said, "To me this was a true complement, she put her trust in me, and I also got to know the "personal" Mabel. She loved children and she loved this community. Her last wishes truly reflect this love. She was a true lady".

"She was very generous", Sandy Sawyer said, "and a wonderful friend. You always knew she was there".

"The first time I met Mabel Blacketer was at a Fulton County Community Foundation meeting", said Terri Johnson. "It was such a pleasure to work with Mabel especially when she donated the land that the Brent Blacketer Memorial Sports Complex now occupies. She was so excited about this project and the benefit it would provide to the youth of Fulton County."

"I will always remember Mabel as a woman of pure grace. I was amazed by her positive attitude as I learned more about the tragedies she has endured in life. Mabel loved life and she loved Fulton County. She would brighten my day by just flashing her beautiful smile." said Johnson, "And now, thanks to her bequest, the Fulton County community will continue to feel her presence for many more years. Her bequest is a gift that will keep on giving".

"She lived by the old axiom of, 'You make a living by what you do, but you make a life by what you give'. She will always be remembered as the lady who made a difference," concluded Robert Peterson.