

Mary Elizabeth Woodward Adkins

by Janine Adkins Gupton

Mary was born on May 13, 1920, at Muderford Christchurch, England. She was the daughter of the late Lt. Col. Edward Hamilton Everard Woodward and Violet Ethel Woodward. Mary grew up in England, where she attended Swanley College and was a land girl working in the fields during World War II.

She started college in the spring of 1939, planning to earn a 2 year degree in Market Gardening. She remembered things in class she said she shouldn't remember, such as a Soil Science teacher who had a terrible lisp. At this time Mary had a German friend called Susie Oppenheimer. One day Susie came to class sucking a sweet. The instructor said, ". . . and now Mith Oppenheimer, don't come to thoil thienth thucking thweeth!"

The war had started in September 1939, and the bombing was getting bad, especially around London. It was decided to evacuate the college, so in the spring of 1940 Swanley College merged with the Midland Agricultural College. Shortly after the college moved, Swanley was bombed.

Mary married Howard Adkins and came to the United States in 1946, when she was 26. The marriage dissolved shortly after the birth of her youngest son. Mary became the sole provider of her children, Richard, Arthur, Janine and Melvin. She was a wonderful mother, supporting them in times of both accomplishments and failures.

Mary lived her entire adult life in Hinton, but maintained close ties with her family in England. She proudly obtained her US citizenship in 1954. Mary is fondly remembered by many of kindergarten, special education and elementary students. She helped start Hinton's first kindergarten where she taught numerous years. She continued in education as a teacher's aide until her retirement in 1985.

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Mary was a devoted member of Ascension Episcopal Church in Hinton for over 50 years, where she served in numerous capacities. All who knew her will remember her kindness and keen sense of humor. Memories of her will be cherished by her children, family, friends and community.

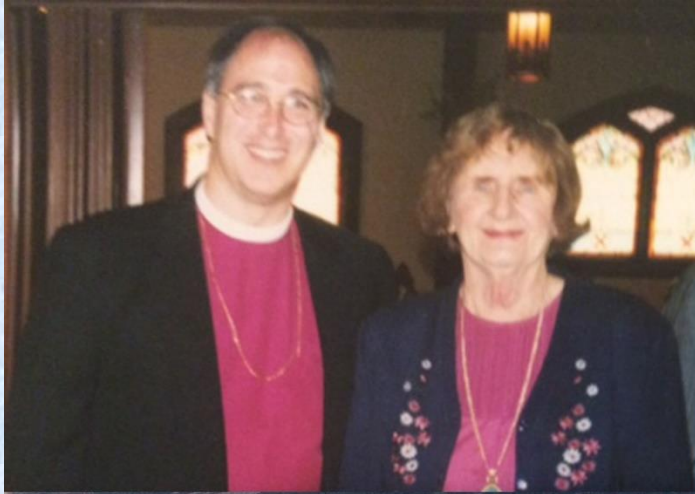
A DVD was created by Jon Averill titled Angels at the Altar. It is the story of an English War Bride who, at the close of World War II, moved to an Appalachian mountain town, into a life far different from what she had known. Mary Adkins nurtured her children as she weathered a multitude of trials, and found joy with the help of her church and community.

On Christmas Eve, 1984, she snapped a picture of the altar at her church. When the photo was developed, many saw the image of two angel visitors at the altar. Some say the same angels returned for her . . . for it was twenty years later, as she was surrounded by family and friends singing Silent Night on a snowy Christmas Eve, that she collapsed. She was transported to Charleston Area Medical Center and died on Christmas Day, December 25, 2004.

Mary Elizabeth Woodward Adkins, We Salute You!

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