



Atrium
Medical Center

F O U N D A T I O N

LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

*A Tribute to the Men and Women
Who Made It Happen*

ISSUE 10

Dolly Frieman Casper

They say good things come in small packages. Good people do, too.

Though diminutive in stature, Helen Ruth “Dolly” Frieman Casper was a powerhouse well known for her care of the less fortunate – accomplished without fanfare. Always well-coiffed and stylishly attired in fashions from bespoke shops such as Henry Harris and Gidding’s in Cincinnati, Dolly worked tirelessly for the causes she believed in.

Among her hands-on good works was her support of Doty House (now Abilities First). For example, to share her love of music, Dolly regularly took children from Doty House to hear the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra at Music Hall – an opportunity most never would have enjoyed had it not been for her.

As a long-time hospital auxiliary, she helped procure a piano for the children’s recreation room. In an article about the city’s leading women, published in the late 1990s in commemoration of Women’s History Month by the Middletown branch of the American Association of

University Women, Dolly is quoted as saying that even though they are ill, children love to sing. “Their voices are positively thrilling.” Reflecting on her volunteer work with the youngest patients, she said, “I loved rocking a child in my arms while feeding them their bottle. Sleep came easily to them then.”

Dolly’s sons – Arthur Brandeis (Brandy), 74, and Sheldon Robert (Bob), 71 – were born at Middletown Hospital. Both are attorneys and represent the second generation of the family law firm,



Casper & Casper, which was started by their uncle, Jack, and their father, Isidor, in 1937.

Remembering Dolly

Brandy Casper remembers Dolly as a great mother – patient and understanding, kind and forgiving. “She saw beauty everywhere,” he says, “in people, ideas, art, music and nature. My mother may have been small, but she had the biggest heart and the most courage of anyone.” Friends remember Dolly as a fun person with loads of energy and a heart of gold who made her mark on Middletown.

Dolly passed away in 2007 at age 92. The city of Middletown was fortunate to have had her as a civic leader. Dolly served as president of the Middletown Area Federation of Women’s Clubs, president of the national Federation of Women’s Clubs and president of the Middletown Chapter of Hadassah, which she was instrumental in founding. She was a member of the Miami University Presidents Club and a charter member of the Founders Club. In 1986, Dolly was the third person to receive Miami University Middletown’s Citizens Recognition Award. Eugene Bennett, executive director at the time, called her “a gracious hostess, faithful friend, and loyal, dedicated, generous patron.”

Atrium Medical Center and Atrium Medical Center Foundation were blessed to know Dolly as a steadfast friend, charter supporter of the HEAL (Help Endure a Loss) program and a staunch advocate of the





Federation influence felt through years

The influence and "driving force" of the Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs were called to mind yesterday at a coffee for Federation Delegates at the home of Mrs. I. A. Casper, Dorn Hill Lane, first vice president of the Federation.

Mrs. M. H. Hohenkemper, member of the Federation's Executive committee, traced the history of the 22-year-old organization, noting that six of its original members Women's Center -- formerly Girl's Club -- Women's Century Club, Middletown Music Club, Women Teachers Club, Young's Club and Home Culture Club are still active. Mrs. J. L. Honey was president of the Federation when it was organized in 1926, and Mrs. Robert Curdrey is now its president. Among its recent projects are sending quilts to Buckeye Girls and promoting an active program in the schools of sponsoring the Charity Ball.

Through the years, ball proceeds turned over to Mid-



MRS. I. A. CASPER, CENTER, DELEGATES COFFEE HOSTESS CHATS WITH MRS. J. G. WIKOFF, LEFT, AND MRS. JOHN NEUENWANDER

Maternal Child Health Center. She was a long-time member of Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, a big supporter of the annual Charity Ball that benefits the hospital, and a tireless annual fundraiser for the hospital. In 1990, Dolly was appointed to the Foundation board where she served until 1995. Of her farewell party, Dolly remarked, "I shall never forget that board, nor the doctors, nurses and friends who wished me well."

From Humble Beginnings

Born in Cincinnati on May 15, 1914, Helen Ruth Frieman was the youngest of eight children. Her petite physique earned her the nickname "Dolly." Dolly's father, David, was an Orthodox Jew who worked as a jack-of-all-trades. Family lore says that he walked more than 6 miles every day, including to and from his synagogue.

As a young woman, Dolly contracted mumps from a young cousin and was left hard of hearing. Neither that nor her humble beginnings, however, stopped her from earning a degree in journalism from the



University of Cincinnati Evening School. It was not common for women to pursue higher education at the time, and those who did typically studied nursing or teaching. Dolly was the first and likely the only member of her immediate family to attend college. Following graduation, she worked for the *Cincinnati Post* (later the *Post Times Star*) for several years.

In 1938, Dolly married Isidor Casper, whom she had met while both attended the University of Cincinnati. She had briefly dated his brother, Jack, but found Isidor “more scholarly.” He graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Miami University in 1932 and, while at the University of Cincinnati Law School, edited the Law Review and earned membership in the Order of the Coif, a prestigious honor society.

The couple lived above Casper’s Dry Goods, the store owned by Isidor’s parents, Polish immigrants Alex and Lena Casper. Located in the Harlan building adjacent to the Lorillard factory on Central Avenue in Middletown, the family enterprise later became a popular women’s store, The Style Shop, which remained open into the 1960s.



In 1960, Dolly, Isidor, their sons and his parents moved to an all-steel home on Sheldon Road. Armco had introduced the all-steel construction method at the Century of Progress Chicago World's Fair in 1934. Later, the family moved to a home situated on three wooded acres along Thorn Lane. Friends remember

how lovely her home was and how she and Isidor displayed souvenirs from their travels. Dolly loved her gardens and enjoyed spending time in the home's large library of classic English literature. Upon Dolly's death, many of her belongings were auctioned. The event drew people who simply wanted something to remember her by. The books she and Isidor had so treasured were donated to Middletown Library, where Isidor had been a trustee and long-time member of the board.

Leaving a Legacy

In 1973, Isidor, with Dolly at his side, endowed the Alex and Lena Casper Memorial Lectures on Social Issues and Current Events at Miami University Middletown to honor the memory of his parents. U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas gave the inaugural lecture on September 28, 1973. True to her reputation as a gracious hostess, Dolly presided over elegant and memorable dinner parties for famous lecturers such as four-time British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, two-time Nobel prize winner Linus Pauling, and historian Arthur Schlesinger – to name but a few.

After Isidor died in 1981 at age 71, Dolly stepped in to carry on his lifelong passions, such as his deeply held religious beliefs. Both she and

Isidor had been active in Temple Beth Sholom for many years. Dolly was a prominent member of the temple's sisterhood, which supported the temple's Sunday school and other activities with events such as card parties, fashion shows and an annual donor dinner.

Isidor, a Jewish historian of note, led the temple's Passover Seder service, which many local leaders attended each year. After Isidor's death, Dolly herself continued leading the service using his notes and giving the blessings in Hebrew. She also hosted a yearly Seder in her home where as many as 20 people, mostly non-Jewish, gathered to share the ceremonial meal and traditional rituals.

During the last decade of her life, Dolly lived at the Seasons retirement community in Cincinnati with her beloved bichon frisé, Muffy. "My mother had great strength of character and purpose," says son Bob. "She was what they called a 'stay-at-home mom' back in the day. But her vision for helping the less fortunate had no boundaries."

Our gratitude for helping with this installment of Legends goes to Dolly's sons and family, Betsy Bender, Marilyn Heiger, Mike Long, Carole Schul and the book Middletown Women from the American Association of University Women.



This article is the tenth in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:

Paul Galeese, *Issue 1*; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, *Issue 2*; Educating Our Caregivers, *Issue 3*; Russell L. "Rusty" Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, *Issue 4*; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, *Issue 5*; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, *Issue 6*; Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet, *Issue 7*; The Wilbur Cohen Family, *Issue 8*; Middletown Area Federation of Women's Clubs, *Issue 9*.

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