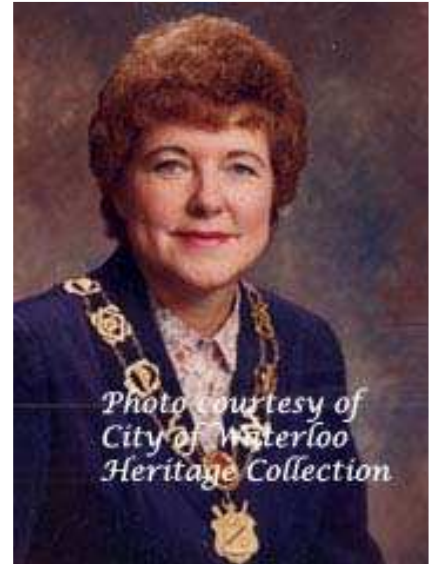


Waterloo 150: Marjorie Carroll

It wasn't long after Marjorie Carroll became the first female mayor of Waterloo that people started calling her "Mrs. Waterloo." The youngest child of a farmer, Carroll was well acquainted with hard work and became known for the long days she put in after becoming mayor in 1977. "Mrs. Waterloo" could be spotted at many events and meetings long after other politicians had gone home.



Carroll, who sat in the mayor's chair for 11 years, began each 14-hour work day with a crossword puzzle and often ended them at her beloved piano. "I don't live with my stress," she said once. "I do the best I can every day, then at night I say my prayers and go to sleep."

Carroll's passion for local politics was nurtured early as she watched her father work local elections and serve as a school board trustee in Bruce County. The dinner table at the family farm near the village of Elmwood was always peppered with political debates. "If something was wrong the neighbours would come to Dad and say, 'What can we do about it?' It would be Dad who would organize everybody."

These early memories would later inspire Carroll to stay in municipal politics despite pressure to enter party politics at the provincial and federal levels. Carroll often said that municipal politics gave her the freedom and independence to bring her "own stamp" to the job of navigating Waterloo's future. "You don't have to tow the party line. I like the variety and immediacy of local politics."

There were high expectations for Carroll who was the only one of her siblings to go beyond the rural one-room schoolhouse the family attended. Carroll graduated from the Kitchener-Waterloo School of Nursing in 1953, then received a degree in public health nursing from the University of Western Ontario in 1959. She met her husband, Glenn Carroll, while working as a nurse in Toronto. In 1962, Carroll left the workforce to focus on the care of their two young daughters, volunteer activities, and work on provincial and federal leadership campaigns for the Progressive Conservative party.

In 1974 she became a Waterloo councillor and two and a half years later was elected mayor by council members after Herb Epp left the mayor's chair. She was acclaimed for three more terms of office before being defeated in 1988 by Brian Turnbull.

Carroll soon turned her energy toward fundraising. Her early experience as a nurse, coupled with her extensive contacts as a local politician, gave her the clout to chair the K-

W Hospital Foundation from 1989 until 1992. “My first love is still health care,” she said.

Her efforts were rewarded in 2004 when the newly renovated childbirth centre at Grand River Hospital was renamed the Marjorie Carroll Childbirth Centre. In 1987, a Conestoga College nursing school lecture hall was named after Carroll. That same year an outdoor plaza at the Waterloo City Centre was named after her in recognition of her work as mayor.

As Carroll moved from the Bruce County farm where she grew up, to university then onto careers in nursing, local politics and fundraising, she was always thinking of her next challenge. “You move on to other things. You don’t dwell on the past. Nothing stands still. I had some tremendous challenges and tremendous successes.”

Photo courtesy of: Waterloo Public Library