

# The Fitzgerald Family Stair Runner

by Ann Fitzgerald Henderson

We were taught that family was the most important thing in the world. We were always close, and we still are. No one could ask for more exceptional parents. They were devoted to each other and to us—Mom so creative and Dad's sharp mind. They left each of their children with a deep sense of ethics so that we could pursue our own particular individual talents.

BOB was a sweet, kind, quiet man, who liked farming and helping everyone. He served in England during WWII. He loved roller skating, particularly on Friday nights, and some of his favorite times were skating while listening to the music he loved. He was such a *'giving'* person, always offering to help whoever needed it. When I was teaching, Bob let me borrow his car to get back and forth. He was generous with everyone in his life.

BILL, like Dad, could also think through projects and then finish them. He loved his farm and was a very thoughtful *'people'* person. I remember going up to Bill's farm and watching him take care of his animals. He loved them, and they knew it. When I was in high school, Bill worked at a Hanover store. If I stopped in on my way home, he would always make me an ice cream cone.

MARSHALL was handsome and a fine athlete who helped pioneer skiing out West. He was a flying instructor during WWII and loved life. His real passion was skiing, and he had lots of fun helping others enjoy it too. Marsh even went off the Dartmouth ski jump with skis that had only toe straps! Amazing!

JANET (Bornhower) has a beautiful voice and a sweet personality. She coached African violets and her children. She loves puzzles and has always been generous with our family. She and Red had a swimming pool, and I remember so many family times at their house. Even Dad got into the water, and water was not his favorite place to be!

HAZEL (Hickson) is just like Mother. She, too, excelled at sewing and knitting and raised four wonderful children. She has always been very talented with a needle and thread and has made some outstanding sweaters, even making up her own knitting patterns.

JUNE (Hodges) continues to carry on the musical tradition in our family to this day, playing the piano so we can all sing. She is an excellent quilter who brings joy to the family with her sense of humor.

MARION (Blodgett) continues to produce magnificent pastels and watercolors—wonderful works of art. She has the family *'worry-wart'* gene and never thinks she has done enough! She is the artist and has done some fabulous paintings and earned many awards for her ability and talent.

ANN (Henderson) is remembered by everyone. She worked her way through college at the Norwich swimming pool. She's the youngest and takes care of everyone! Ann taught school when she was first married and even today, she is always inviting people for meals, having parties for friends, and helping those who need help.

My four sisters are still going strong, and as always, it is total heaven to be with them. We are all getting older but to us it means more time together to have laughs and fun and great *'rememberings.'* We really miss our three brothers, Bob, Bill, and Marsh. They always had time to *'play'* with their sisters.

Our mother and father were loved by many. And why not? Look at what they gave back. They were always the first to help when anyone needed anything. There was always enough food on the table if any of our friends wanted to stay for supper. Our home was a *'welcoming'* place for everyone we knew. Even if it was my turn on the kitchen calendar to do the dishes after supper, I knew I was loved, and I would probably have help from one of my sisters or brothers.

My parent's bedroom was in back of the kitchen in our Elm Street home. Our father had an early morning habit of sitting at the kitchen table smoking a cigarette before anyone else was up. One morning, while sitting there in his pajamas, a girl came from the upstairs hall, walked across the kitchen to the bathroom, then back again and upstairs. My father was shocked and rushed back to the bedroom asking my mother, "Hazel, I think I've forgotten one." That was a family joke for years! We were always encouraged to have our friends stay over, and they all wanted to because our family had such a wonderful *'flavor.'* These were special times for everyone.

Our Christmas times on the farm were like something out of a novel. Dad would ask Mother to *'put the snowsuits on the girls.'* Then he would hitch up the horse and wagon, and we would all go into the woods to pick out a Christmas tree. This was just another of the joys of living in a country town and on a farm. We always had kittens, dogs, horses, and cows, and we have wonderful memories of life on a farm. Our cousins, aunts and uncles always wanted to stay *'longer than they had planned'* on their visits. Many times our cousins would visit and leave some of their *'outgrown'* clothing. Mother would say to me, *"June bug, pick out something you like, and we will make it fit."* Everyone called me *'June bug,'* because I was born in June, and it was an easy name to spell. That's when I got the sewing *'bug,'* which I still have and always will.

Speaking of talents, when my father was young, he sang in several Boston theaters and later on, in minstrel shows and other public places. On one occasion, a man asked if he could travel with him for a year, with the promise of coming back a millionaire. My father's response, *"But I have a family, and I could not leave them for a whole year."*

Our father's love of music is still shared by us. We can all remember the many wonderful times with Mom at the piano and all of us singing our hearts



Fitzgerald Family — back, left to right: Bill, Hazel, Marshall, and Bob; front left to right: June, Hazel, Ann, Ernest, Marion, and Janet.

out—a real definition of *'joy in our family.'* Our home was home to all who entered. We did not have *'things,'* but we had LOVE.

Hazel and Ernest Fitzgerald and their 8 children lived at 18 Elm Street on the corner of Elm Street and Jones Circle from 1941–1955. This beautiful stair runner, the risers hooked by Hazel and the treads by Ernest, is a gift from the Fitzgerald sisters (Janet, Hazel, June, Marion, and Ann) to the Norwich Historical Society. The history of the Fitzgerald family is depicted on each riser and numbered below 1–11. The Norwich Historical Society is honored to have this piece of history added to our collection.

1. 16 Elm Street
2. Hazel hooking this rug and Ernest hunting
3. Ann at the Norwich Pool
4. Marion's paintings
5. June loved music
6. Jerry's favorite sweater designed and knit by Hazel
7. Janet and her violets
8. Marsh ski jumping
9. Bill on his farm
10. Bob and his roller skates
11. All the children

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