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Mary Marik's impact on Island and beyond was profound

Good-bye, Mary Poppins

By Laurel Hauser, editor emeritus

Note: This special tribute was written when Laurel was editor, and Mary was leaving the Island.

Winds change, blowing people into and out of our lives. It was a happy wind that blew Mary Marik into mine. During this past year as the Washington Island Observer's managing editor, I've felt, many times, like I've had my own personal Mary Poppins, there to make everything run smoother, every bit of medicine go down easier. And I'm guessing all who've known her he've felt the same way.

I've never seen Mary Marik pull a floor lamp out of a carpetbag like Mary Poppins did—but that's only because I haven't needed a floor lamp. Everything else I've needed, she's produced, seemingly without much effort and with a truly generous spirit.

Since acting as managing editor herself in the paper's early days under its current ownership, she's worn nearly every hat available and is blessed with a remarkable memory and an abundance of common sense. Advice on handling a tricky letter to the editor? Try this. A better way to phrase a complicated statement?

Maybe this. The obscure AP Style rule for quotation marks used in titles? Oh, here it is.

Mary has the rare quality of being equally adept at dealing with people, ideas and technical issues, and the even rarer quality of being able to offer a well-formed opinion and then graciously bow out if her advice isn't taken (which rarely happened).

We accept jobs when we're young based on bottom-line items like pay and benefits. The older we get, the more we know that the true paycheck is getting to work with someone who advances our skills and, if we're lucky, expands our world and even makes us laugh. If they become a mentor and friend, too, we've hit the jackpot. I hit the jackpot working with Mary.

When the winds change and blow Mary, and her wonderful husband, Warren, from the Island, I'll feel a bit like one of the Banks children, left without my governess. But Mary Poppins is Mary Poppins wherever she goes, and there are lucky people in Chicago who don't yet know a happy wind is blowing their way. Thank you and best wishes, Mary.

Ferry Cabin News Mary Marik Tribute

Mary Marik and the Island Observer

By Dick Purinton

Since the relaunch of the Island Observer as a community-owned and managed newspaper, no one was as consistently involved and as critical to its success as Mary Marik.

I say this through my observations as an occasional contributor, but also as a member of the Observer's editorial committee. This latter group met frequently during the first several years to discuss policy, content, and direction. While everyone present had their own opinion as to what might be best for the paper in both the long term and the short term, I think it was Mary's voice that consistently carried the most weight.

One example I recall that consumed considerable discussion at the time, at several editorial committee meetings, had to do with listing the arrests and legal infractions, and sometimes the court records, of individuals. These were the names of neighbors, friends and relatives. How does a paper responsibly report such infractions to inform the public about matters of public record without inciting anger and resentment in the community? Mary's answer was always to encourage objective truthfulness, yet do so without needlessly rubbing the individual's name in the mud.

She was a stickler for style and correct form. As the first editor of this paper under new ownership and management, Mary set the tone for others to emulate, in particular the editors who followed. Mary had years of editing experience behind her. Few of us have had comparable exposure or practice in newspapering, especially editing. Behind the scenes, what Mary offered in terms of suggestions and assistance was especially important to the editors who succeeded her.

For the past number of years, having returned with her husband Warren to Chicago, Mary was still a vital part of this newspaper as copy reader and an ex-officio editor, a silent but important voice helping to produce a product with consistent form and correctness. She did this, as I understand it, simply because she thought it was important, and because she enjoyed being involved.

Mary's activity behind the scenes has been a steady and important influence in making the Island Observer a source of news and reliable information, and not just a format for features and entertainment.

Mary's quiet influence will be missed.

Mary's guidance, criticisms, and compliments taken to heart

By Emily Small

When I started covering town board meetings for the Observer, I was doing it temporarily and with no journalism experience. (A brief stint at my high school paper notwithstanding). Temporary turned to nine months later and the onset of a global pandemic. My editor was stuck in Mexico, everything was shutting down and news camouflaged as gossip masquerading as information was flying fast and thick. Zoom was not a thing; masks were for hospital staff; and mandates and policies were changing daily.

Back up a few years. My husband had done lots of work over the years for the Warren and Mary Marik. Mary in particular had always made a point to send handwritten notes with payment and had specific compliments for his work and professionalism. My impression of her in the few times we met was someone who did not miss anything. When she gave you her attention, it was all of her attention. Not everyone can make others feel seen that way.

It was Mary who helped me so much during that weird time in early 2020.

She and her husband had moved from the Island back to Chicago a few years before the pandemic hit, but she continued to help proof and write stories from afar. Mary responded to many, many emails from me, answered my questions thoughtfully, and gave me useful and pointed advice.

After that rocky time, Mary continued to help me. She never made me feel self-conscious even when I knew my questions were kind of dumb. When she gave criticism I took it to heart, the same when she complimented me, because I knew she did not miss anything, and she did not waste words. She said what she meant.

I wish I had known her better. When I heard she died, I immediately thought how I would miss knowing she was out there reading my writing, finding the "sens" that should have been "sons" and vice versa.

But then, maybe she still is. I am proud to be a part of a newspaper she fixed her admirable intellect on. I will honor her memory by telling the truth and telling it well.

Mary knew what needed to be done

By Lucia Petrie

The Washington Island Observer had been for sale for three years when a group of enthusiastic Islanders with little journalism experience bought the paper from the Thorps, who were owners for two decades.

Among the new owner group were finance, legal and marketing experts, volunteers in various activities and wonderful writers.

Mary Marik was lone among us who sensed—in fact knew—what needed to be done to insure a competent product that would do what local newspapers are supposed to do: increase civic conversation and report facts about town government and events. She covered town and school meetings herself, in her time as editor.

Before Mary, the Observer had not covered government issues or meetings. Setting the stage for the time when she retired, Mary wrote extensive policies and practices about how local news is covered - respecting the privacy of small town residents yet providing information. Those policies and practices serve the paper today.

We are continually grateful for her contributions and visionary leadership.

I gained so much from my email relationship with Mary

By Heidi Hodges

Here's the thing. I've spent decades in journalism. Enough to have a bit of a chip on my shoulder when it comes to newspapering.

A bit of background: I started in college with a complicated major in all aspects of journalism. I worked diligently with a group of highly-motivated fellow students on campus newspaper. I was the editor of that paper during my junior and senior years.

Then, I went on to work for the Advocate, write a weekly column, eventually edit the Door County Magazine, and occasionally freelance for the Milwaukee Sentinel. I covered some great stories and photographed the Berlin Wall coming down in November of 1989. I even photographed a number of Packer games from the sidelines.

And, today, I co-own the Door Keewaupee Arts Guidebook.

I've won so many awards, they cover my wall and are stacked in my closet.

Journalism has never stopped for me. I have used all aspects of the professions, from photography, editing,

Continued on next page