

Mary lost husband Larry, daughter Barbara Rochester and brothers, David, Charles, John and Harry Hillman as well as a sister, Clara Sheffield. Surrounded by a host of nieces and nephews who refer to her as "Aunt Min," in reference to Cab Calloway's 1931 hit Minnie the Moocher, Mary Huckaby will turn 100-years-old in Astoria Place of Cincinnati just around the corner from where she was raised. Her legacy on the hill continues with a fifth generation being raised in the secluded wooded enclave maintained by her daughter Carole Douglas, son-in-law John Rochester and grandsons Shadd, Todd and Jason Douglas.

Mary's friends would comment how quiet it was as they sat on her porch enjoying the breeze and the birds. To this day she pines to sit on that porch and "look into St. Bernard." Other days she threatens to throw members of the Astoria staff down the iconic well standing on her hill in the woods.

*Photos from ***Black and White Airmen Their True History*** by John Fleischman, 2007 Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, New York.

About Your Neighbors: March 2020

Description

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Mary Huckaby, a long-time North Avondale resident will be 100-years-old on April 11th.

Mary Huckaby was born Helen Hillman on April 11, 1920. Her mother, Fannie Mae Jones, was gifted a home by her husband Charles Bedford Hillman's mother in 1922. The area was incorporated in 1928 as North Avondale. Fannie Mae raised Helen Hillman on a hill in the woods. "Mary Louise" as she was called didn't know her name was Helen. She got a birth certificate needed for a job at Wright's Aeronautical making airplane parts during World War II. It was discovered that she was legally named after her maternal grandmother "Helen" though called after her paternal grandmother "Mary Louise."





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Mary Louise Hillman pictured in pigtails with her North Avondale Elementary School classmates in 1928. Mary Louise and Tuskegee Airman John H. Leahr teased each other into old age about which was the first black family to live in North Avondale.*



Mary Louise Hillman is pictured front and center wearing plumes with the "white snowdrops" of Clinton Springs Avenue for North Avondale School's May Day celebration.

Growing up in St. Andrew's Episcopal Church downtown, Mary saved her World War II factory money towards a house across the private drive from her childhood home.

Mary married returning soldier Lawrence Cleves Huckaby on August 19, 1943 and began constructing a homestead on that hill. The one bedroom frame house where he and Mary eventually raised daughters Carole and Barbara had no hot or cold water, a coal stove and an outhouse. Over the years he added indoor plumbing, a heat pump, an extra bedroom, a kitchen, a garage, central air and a swimming pool. They built an entire house around the original one bedroom frame. The couple acquired adjacent lots where Larry built sheds, kept bees and managed extensive gardens. Mary was always there with a cold beer, a requested tool or a piece of advice. As a reward for their efforts the private drive is now named Huckaby Lane.

The Huckabys were active in the community and in their congregation always prepared to offer labor and bushels of fresh produce. Mary was a Golden Girl at Bethel Baptist Church and active with the Bond Hill Senior Group. Larry was a Deacon at Bethel.

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Author
northavondale