



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MATRIARCH NAMED FAYETTE COUNTY MAY 'FACE'**

**Uniontown, PA** – “They call me the matriarch of the Smith family,” Mary Perry said with a laugh.

The mother of 13 celebrated her 90th birthday March 25. Many of her nine living children, 19 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren marked the occasion at Mt. Macrina Manor in Uniontown.

“My kids gave me a big surprise party,” Perry said. “In all my years, I’ve never been so happy, and I was so surprised at how many people were there just to see me. It was just a wonderful day. I cried a little bit. I just love them all.”

A New York native and oldest living member of her family, Perry - then Mary Smith - moved to Connellsville with her family when she was 15-years-old. An Immaculate Conception High School graduate, Perry then attended night school at Franklin Commercial College.

After marrying her late husband, Harold Perry, the couple moved to Cleveland, Ohio, for several years before returning to Fayette County and settling in Uniontown. Harold passed away in 1990, just six weeks shy of their 40th wedding anniversary.

The Perrys had 13 children, Harold Jr., Dennis, Doris, Charles, Henry, Paul, Lois, Beth, Susan, Mary Louise, Mark, Debra and Scott. The latter four children are deceased.

“Growing up in Fayette County was a lot of fun. There was some sadness, but mostly happy times,” Perry said. “The kids back in those days always went outside. We had a television, but not all the electronics and stuff they have today.”

In addition to her early secretarial positions, Perry was the assistant manager of St. John the Evangelist’s school cafeteria for more than 16 years, serving hundreds of other children who came to be her extended family.

Perry said some of her favorite family memories include celebrating birthdays, enjoying her mother-in-law’s homemade cakes (and never having to bake one herself), and watching her children play at the neighborhood ballfield.

Through the years, Perry was a member of St. John’s Christian Mothers, the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, president of the Geibel High School Mothers’ Club and a brownie troop leader.

Most recently, one of her favorite life experiences was becoming a great-great-grandmother to a baby born in December.

“The family’s getting pretty big,” Perry said. “I learned to use a cellphone to keep in touch with them all across the country.”

These days, she proudly delivers the morning announcements and attends all social activities at Mt. Macrina, where she’s lived for almost three years. Perry said her family will visit her there on Sunday to celebrate Mother’s Day.

Her daughter, Doris Velicevich of Greensboro, said growing up in Uniontown with Mary was “wonderful.”

“She’s always had such a strong belief in her faith, and that’s something she passed down to all of us,” Velicevich said, adding her mother is exceptionally kind and strong. “She never gives up no matter what.”

Some of Velicevich’s favorite memories include the traditional Sunday family days spent fishing at a Brownsville park, and loading the entire family into the station wagon for the annual trip to Kennywood Park.

“My parents always had a good and loving relationship and made sure we did things as a family,” she said. “It took a team to raise all of us, and she really embraces that matriarch title.”

For all these reasons and more, Mary Perry has been named the Fayette County PR Initiative’s May “face” in our monthly Faces and Places series.

“You couldn’t ask for a better mom,” Velicevich said. “I don’t know how she did it with all of us. She was always there for everybody. She still is. She’s such a special mom.”

To learn more about Fayette County, visit [www.FayetteCountyPA.org](http://www.FayetteCountyPA.org).

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