

May Profile in FOCUS



Irene and Maston Sansom

Irene and Maston are easily recognized as the elderly couple who sit by the window in the dining room. We see him gently leading her in and out of the room. She often wears a pretty patchwork jacket. They will be celebrating their 73rd wedding anniversary in June.

The Sansoms have done something we all may have thought of doing at one time or another. Most of us have only said "Someday....." But in 1984, Irene wrote a delightful 40-page booklet giving a detailed account of her early years. Entitled *My Childhood*, it is dedicated to "my children's children." Some years later in 1998 a family reunion occurred and inspired Maston to write his memoirs entitled *A Ninety Year Trip to Easy Street*.

Irene grew up in a valley near the Sciota River in Ohio where farms have been passed down for generations. Their roots go back to Revolutionary times. She and her five sisters made many visits to aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins on surrounding farms. One of her first memories is the 1913 flood that devastated the valley. The family took refuge in a tiny room up in the attic until a neighbor arrived with a boat and took all but two (her oldest sister and a hired man who were later rescued) to dry land. Irene felt a great loss when she watched her pet piglet float away with other farm animals.

Irene describes farm life from barn-raising to planting time, thrashing, harvesting, slaughtering and food preservation. She says, "We raised what we ate." Social events revolved around the church and the Grange Hall – dinners, dancing and sometimes entertaining troops stationed in nearby Camp Sherman during World War I. Irene's description of her young life, so clearly and lovingly remembered, is a joy to read.

Maston's family also dates back to the Revolutionary era. He describes his ancestors as *dirt poor frontier pioneers* who had settled in what is now West Virginia. He spent a few

childhood summers with his grandparents, and describes the living conditions as primitive – a log house, dug well, nearby cave for cool storage, oil lighted lamps, heat from wood or coal dug nearby. It was in these conditions that the grandparents raised 14 children.

Maston's family lived in Chillicothe, a town in the Sciota valley. WWI memories are vivid – trains full of troops stopping at the RR Station, and the flu epidemic that killed hundreds of people. Maston and a brother attended the local school. An assignment in the eighth grade was to design and build a desk, and he received an A+. This desk now sits in the Sansom's Coburg Village apartment.

Irene and Maston met in high school and were married in 1930. Fleury was born the next year. Now, Maston seeing no future in hotel management, took civil service exams, passed and was appointed correction officer in a federal penitentiary. At 38, during WW2, he joined the navy and was sent to Pearl Harbor where he became a CPO in charge of cargo handling. As a member of the Naval Air Reserve he was called to duty in the Korean War and put in charge of the catapults for launching planes from the USS Mindoro.

Post war years brought much happiness. Three sons were born, their dream house built, and family vacations taken. His very accurate account of a month's vacation for a 7320 mile trip through the west coastal region cost \$558.22.

Irene and Maston are grateful for the many blessings in their lives. They feel their best accomplishment was raising four children, all of whom are successful in their chosen fields. Fleury has giving them their first grand and great grandchildren, Maston Jr. is a senior engineer at Knolls lab, Hugh in West Point is a VP at Comcast and Byron in Annapolis is retired as Commander.

Irene's memory is now failing and Maston has a severe hearing loss. But they say "We are now in the Twilight Zone of life, and are so thankful that our son Maston Jr. led us to this place. We are happy here."