



Mary Winn Norris

August 8, 1914 - June 27, 2014

Mary Winifred Norris

PRINCETON — Noted Princeton artist and educator Mary Winifred Skinner Walter Norris died early Friday morning, June 27, 2014, at St. Margaret's Hospital in Spring Valley, just a few weeks before her 100th birthday.

She was born Aug. 8, 1914, in Princeton to Josef I. Skinner, a prominent Princeton attorney, and Winifred Canavan Skinner, a school teacher and artist. She graduated from Princeton High School in 1932 and from the University of Illinois. She then attended The Art Student's League, in New York City. She taught high school art for many years, retiring from Princeton High School. She learned to draw and to love art from her mother, at a very early age, and remained a prolific and respected artist for her entire life. She kept in touch with many of her former students, and took great joy in their accomplishments.

Mary Win married Eugene Walter in 1943. They spent two years in Florida, where he was stationed in the Army. After the war, they returned to Greenwood Cottage, 543 E. Peru, which Mary Win inherited at age 21 from her great aunt, Lottie Taylor. In 1949, Mary Win and Eugene adopted a daughter, Sara, who died in 2012. Mary Win and Eugene restored and cared for Greenwood Cottage together until his death in 1972. She continued to live there until 2012. Her last two years were spent at Heartland Healthcare

Center in Henry. There she continued to draw and paint, and was preparing a new drawing for entry at the county fair at the time of her death.

In 1982, Mary Win married Donald Norris, a prominent farmer from LaMoille. She and Don had known each other as children, and became reacquainted when he asked her to illustrate a book that he was writing. Don died in 1999.

Mary Win's mother died when she was 9 years old. Her father married again, and she had two half siblings, George Skinner and Katherine (Katy) Skinner Graham, both deceased. Mary Win is survived by a granddaughter, Nicole Zahn of Milwaukee, Wis.; a sister-in-law, Jane Skinner, and a first cousin, Clay H. Skinner, both of Princeton; and nieces Sallee Skinner Beneke, Jerri Skinner Stone, Lisa Skinner Bastardo, Beckay Graham Mezza, Peggay Graham Mc Callum and Holly Walter Jordan, nephew Josef Skinner, and their families. Also surviving are three stepchildren, Munroe, Elizabeth and Malcolm Norris, and their families. Honorary family members include her longtime caregiver, Shirley Balensiefen; her dog, Charlie; and her wide circle of friends.

Mary Win loved the city of Princeton, and was one of its best-known citizens. She contributed to the historic preservation of its buildings and gardens, and worked to promote the arts in the area. Her paintings can be seen in homes and public buildings all over the community. She was also a fine sculptor and textbook illustrator. The thousands of students she taught, many of whom went on to careers in the arts, are also part of her legacy.

A memorial celebration is planned in early August, to coincide with Mary Win's 100th birthday, with further details to be announced later.