

***Nona McGlashan -- A Woman Who
Touches Everyone Around Her***

by
Barbara Rogers
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**"The Aim of Social Work is to Help People
Help Themselves"**

Nona McGlashan, O Days of Wind and Moon

Nona McGlashan is clearly a woman who touches everyone around her with her willingness to help others, her ambition, her optimism, and her energy! After the death of her mother at birth, Nona lived a story-book life as the adopted child of her grandparents, C. F. and Leonora McGlashan. She has touched thousands of people, especially underprivileged children, during her 20 years with the Sisters of Social Service; and she has inspired many around her through her teachings, writings, and love of life!

Growing up in the McGlashan Mansion

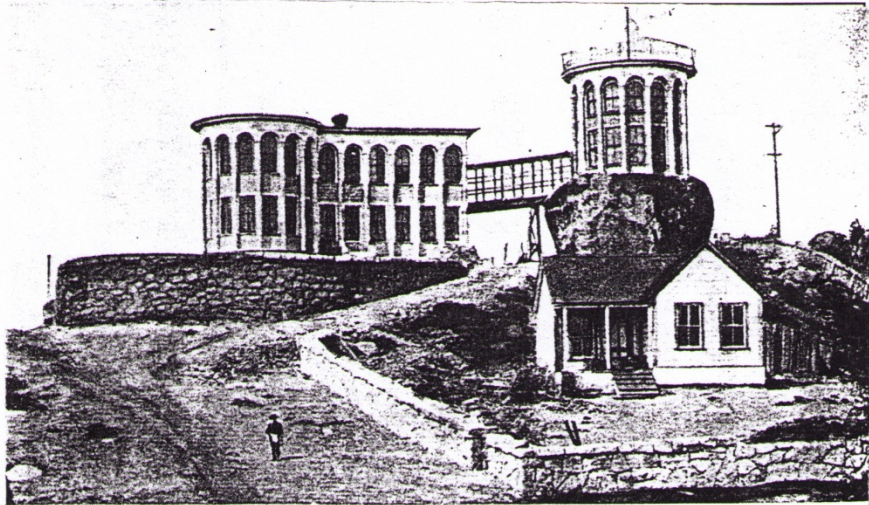
Nona McGlashan was born on March 12, 1911 in San Francisco, California--in a



Nona's mother, Maqueda (Mrs. Carl L. Shinn), died three weeks after Nona was born.

hospital. It may not seem unusual that she was born in a hospital, most of us today are, but during the early 1900's people did not trust them. At that time, it was considered safer to bear a child at home. It was not uncommon for doctors to deliver child after child without washing their hands (thus a law was made for them to do so). Nona's mother, Maqueda, fell under these

circumstances. Maqueda's doctor did not wash his hands when he delivered Nona. Consequently, Maqueda died three weeks after giving birth. After her mother's death, Nona's grandparents, C. F. and Leonora McGlashan, adopted Nona as their daughter. Nona's father, Attorney Carl Shinn, visited Nona once or twice a year; but from that point on she grew very close to her grandparents and could not imagine growing up with anyone else. Nona has wonderful memories of growing up in the McGlashan mansion in Truckee. C. F. had built the mansion for his wife and their seven children during the late 1800s. Attached to one end of the mansion, C. F. built a museum, naming it the Rocking Stone Tower. As Nona grew older, she would guide tourists through her grandfather's museum. The museum was where C. F. kept the following: his renowned butterfly collection, all relics of the Donner party tragedy not returned to survivors, Indian baskets and other artifacts of the Washoe tribe, Nona's great-grandfather's Civil War uniform, and other curious artifacts from around the world.



View of the McGlashan home and Rocking Stone Tower.



Nona's grandparents, Leonora (in 1908) and Charles Fayette McGlashan (in 1912).



The 1917 McGlashan family reunion, held at Gilmore's home in Berkeley. Back row: Jackson Gregory Sr., Lotus Gregory, Elizabeth Gilmore, Wm. W. Gilmore, June Kelley, Dr. George F. Kelley, Bliss Isabel McGlashan, Undine Raymond, Dr. Earl L. McGlashan, Robert C. McGlashan, Ximena Howard, John C. Howard. Second row: Nonette Hennessy, James S. Hennessy Sr., Henrietta (Mrs. E. L.) McGlashan, Baby Elizabeth McGlashan, Ella Keiser Greenleaf, Leonora G. Keiser McGlashan, Charles Fayette McGlashan, Martinette (Nettie) Kinsell, Nonette (Mrs. J. S.) Hennessy, June Hennessy. Front row: Jackson Gregory Jr., Douglas M. Kelley, George M. Kelley, Naida Gilmore, Natalie Raymond, David Gilmore, Nona McGlashan, James S. Hennessy Jr., Albert Raymond, John V. Hennessy.

The Depression

Nona's grandfather built the first high school in Truckee, Meadow Lake High School, in 1901 to ensure his children would receive a good education. However, when his children were grown, and Nona was ready for high school, the system had changed quite a bit, thus she was sent away to go to Placer High School. At the age of 17 (1928), Nona graduated from high school and began a college education. She spent her first year at a Junior College in Sacramento, then transferred to UC Berkeley starting her sophomore year. Like many women during this time, Nona went to college with hopes of finding a husband. She fell in love with Wesley Davis, an engineer for Boeing. By this time, the nation was in the midst of the Depression. Nona, however, did not feel the effects of the Depression because Davis had a very good job, and he wanted to take care of her so she wouldn't have to work. Though the Depression did not bring economic hardships, it did come with emotional blows for Nona. In the fall of 1930 Nona's grandmother had a heart attack, which kept her in bed for a long period afterwards. Shortly after, in January, 1931, Nona's grandfather died from cancer. After her grandfather's death, Nona left college to take care of her grandmother. When her grandmother was sick, she asked Nona to marry that young engineer before she died, so that she knew that she was taken care of. Nona got married August 12, 1932, two years before her grandmother died. In 1935, Nona realized that though she had a good relationship with her husband, there were a couple of major issues they would never agree on (one of which was having kids). That year, she divorced her husband and went back to college for a year, while she taught at the California School for the Blind in Berkeley.

Sisters of Social Service and the War

Two weeks after her grandmother's death, Nona's aunts wanted her to go with them to hear Father O'Hara speak at a church about Catholicism. Nona felt she had better go to "save her aunts"-- for Catholicism was for the ignorant masses, and anybody who was anybody was not a Catholic. To Nona's surprise, she was very intrigued with Father O'Hara's elegance and intelligence. She wondered how such an intellectual and intriguing man could believe so wholeheartedly about the Catholic religion. Nona's intrigue with Father O'Hara and what he was about, distracted her from hearing a word he said that day. As a result, Nona had to go the next week to hear what he was talking about. The following week, the same thing happened--Nona's intrigue with this man and how he could be one of "the ignorant masses" still didn't make sense. Once again, her trying to figure him out kept her from hearing his message. The third week, Nona saw Father O'Hara. This time she listened to what he said and as she left, she was swept by a feeling of closeness with God. Nona knew that night that it wouldn't be long before she would be baptized.

By 1936, Nona entered the Sisters of Social Service. They sent her to Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles to finish her education. She spent 6 years working off "Skid Row" in Los Angeles working with inner-city Italian, Mexican, and Black children. She worked at getting the children involved with the church and other activities, to keep them off the streets. As a Catholic Sister, Nona would walk through the barrios with the utmost respect from the Mexican families and gangs, whereas the police would have to

drive through the streets in two's! This was at the beginning of W.W.II, and Nona worked closely with the pachuco gangs, who were too young for the war (17 and under).

Nona recalls one district she worked in--the 7th Street District. One afternoon, as she was walking down 7th Street, she noticed graffiti on a building that read, "7th St. Wolves". Nona thought in her mind, I need to find out about the Wolves and help them. Nona saw a woman whom she knew standing outside the front of her house, and approached her with a hello. The woman motioned that they needed to be quiet because her son was in the house sleeping. Nona looked at her with curiosity as to why the young boy was sleeping in the middle of the afternoon. The woman explained quietly, "he was out 'till three in the morning with those 7th St. Wolves, and now he wants me to call him 'Gopher'." Nona said she was going to wake him up, and asked the woman to go along with what she's doing. Nona then began to talk a little louder to this woman about how she was upset with the police and how they are blaming the 7th St. Wolves for all the crime. That she didn't think it was fair, and would like to talk to the Wolves because she and Father would like to set up a dance for them. The next thing she knew, the front door opened, and the young boy came out, rubbing his tired eyes, asking what he had heard about a dance. Nona said, that if he knew anyone who was in the 7th St. Wolves (knowing that he knew, she was acting nonchalant), to tell the leader to talk to her about having a dance, and that she would be at the church that evening if he wanted to come by. That evening, the leader of the Wolves came by, with two members on each side, Mafia-style, to talk to Nona. Nona explained to him that she and Father would like to set up a dance and other programs for he and his gang (e.g.different sports activities, teaching them Judo, etc.). Nona said that if they are interested, that he needs to bring the whole

gang to the church by 7 p.m. the next Monday. Monday came along, and around 7:30 p.m. about 40 to 50 boys came strolling into the church. They said they were late because the police stopped them and patted everyone down, not believing that they were all going to church. They got to the church, and Father was nervous as can be. He asked Nona if they should pray before their meeting. Nona said, "Of course. This is a church, they'll understand." Father started off the meeting with a prayer, and all the boys stood up and prayed with him, as if they were little boys again. From there it started, the 7th St. Wolves met several times a week as a whole, to give their confessions, and to participate in youth activities that Nona and Father had set up. Three Years later, the 7th Street Wolves became the 7th Street Boys Club, and they became an active group in the community.

Another area Nona's church covered included that of the Diamond Street Gang. Here, Nona helped gang members who were just about to be sent off to war. One day after noticing graffiti on a wall that read "Diamond St. Gang," Nona asked a young boy she knew if he had heard of this gang. He said yes, and offered to take her to the leader's (Duke) house. When she got to his house, Duke looked at her, unsure as to what her motives were. Nona explained to him that she knew he and many others in his gang would be going to the war soon as paratroopers. She then asked him, whether any of them had done a communion--that it would be important for them to be able to pray while they are at war. The gang leader said that he has never done a communion, and he knew several other guys hadn't either. Nona (knowing that these guys were "too cool" to go to church) then suggested that he gets his gang together and that they discuss meeting every week, someplace outside of church, so they can learn to pray before they go to war. Duke

then put his fingers to his mouth and whistled very loudly. The next thing Nona knew, young boys were coming out from everywhere. They all gathered around and she explained to them the importance of communion before they go to war and that she would get a meeting place for them if they would like to get involved. The gang was agreeable, and Nona was able to find a parent who had a butcher shop available for them to meet at weekly. They met weekly, learning about communion and participated in other activities as the time for them to go to war grew closer. Finally, they all graduated from communion and Nona was told by the police that the crime rate had decreased by over 90%.

China-The Golden Opportunity

After the war ended, Nona was given a golden opportunity by the Sisters of Social Service to open a branch in China. This was Nona's dream come true, for she was always very intrigued with China and had always wanted to go there since she was a young girl. In 1946 Nona sailed off with Sister Candita, to open a branch together. The two stayed in Shanghai, where they worked closely with UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) and C.W.C.C. (Catholic Welfare Committee for China). The C.W.C.C. was an agency that distributed clothing and relief food to orphanages. The agency and the Shanghai Mayor gave Nona an office and warehouse space to allow her to provide relief for the orphanages. At this time, the only groups who had access to relief goods were the churches or the consulate. Nona stayed very busy in China with all the hats she wore. Nona taught social work at the Aurora Women's College. She also investigated the needs of dozens of orphanages, which meant having to travel by any means necessary (river boat, steamer, jeep, train, and bus). Nona also opened a Russian

Agency, to give relief to the "White Russians" who supported the Czar and were forced to leave Russia, with nowhere to go but Shanghai.

At the end of 1948 Nona came back to Los Angeles, ill from hepatitis--which had gone undiagnosed for a year! Around this time, she would have had to leave China anyway, because Mao came in 1949 and proclaimed the People's Republic of China. Nona remained in Los Angeles for a year, then started another branch in Portland. After twenty years of working with the Sisters of Social Service, Nona decided to wind down a little. In 1956, she left the Sisters of Social Service with quite a path behind her--a path of hope and energy that was left with every community she touched.

After the Sisters of Social Service

After leaving the Sisters of Social Service, Nona came back to San Francisco where she focused on her interest in writing. She obtained her Masters Degree at San Francisco State University in Radio/TV, after which she became an editor for an international trade magazine. Shortly after, Nona published her first book, Give Me a Mountain Meadow, a biography on her grandfather, then co-edited her grandfather's articles and letters in From The Desk Of C. F. McGlashan. Today, at the age of 85, she has just finished her third book, O Days of Wind and Moon, a story about her experiences in China with the Sisters of Social Service. Since the age of 65, Nona has written 15 articles for the Sierra Heritage magazine, has taken up piano lessons, and is currently teaching a creative writing workshop for senior residents where she lives and for a blind school.

Footnote

When I asked Nona who her role model was, her answer gave me insight to what I already guessed about her. She said she never looks at achievers to be role models, instead, role models should be noted for who they are inside and how they've felt about certain situations. Her grandmother was her role model because she represented patience, kindness, strength, and was sweet-tempered. Nona's belief that people should be recognized not just for their achievements, but for who they are as a person, is what inspired her to write her first book about her grandfather. It is clear that Nona represents the same strength, patience, and kindness as did her grandmother. Nona is truly a "stereotype breaker" of her time, and a woman one would find hard not to admire. She has shared so much with so many people. With her ambition, kindness, and energy, she is truly a role model for many women including myself.



1995, Nona McGlashan, who had lost her eyesight from a degenerative condition, relaxes in her apartment with her guide dog, Linnie. (Today, her peripheral vision has improved quite a bit, and she no longer needs her guide dog.)