



Knapik Memorial Scholarship Endowment



This scholarship honors two extraordinary members of the Knapik family who were dedicated to helping others in our Westfield community. The recipients of this award are part of the lasting legacy of Rose Curran Knapik and Joseph Curran Knapik.

Joseph Knapik lovingly wrote the following story of his mother's scholarship in 2005. When Joe passed away on February 5, 2014, the Knapik family immediately decided to honor both Rose and Joe with this Knapik Memorial Scholarship Endowment and added Joe's story.

Helen Rose Curran was born on December 24, 1902. Her parents, John and Mary (Condron) Curran, left Ireland in the late 1800's to settle in Westfield, and establish a home and family. Rose, as she was known to everyone who knew her, had two brothers and three sisters. The other children born to John and Mary died in infancy. The family home was on Prospect Street and Rose attended Prospect Hill School with her siblings. Throughout her life, she always maintained close contact with friends and relatives who grew up on "The Hill."



Rose graduated from Westfield High School, which in 1918 was located where Westfield's main fire station is sited today. She was also very proud of her brother, Jack, who at that time was serving in World War I with the U.S. Army in France.

In the 1920's, Rose trained at the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Springfield and graduated as a Registered Nurse. During this period of her life, she was known to have been a passenger in an open cockpit, two-winged aeroplane, similar to those flown during World War I.

During her working years, Rose was a staff nurse at Noble Hospital and also at the Westfield Sanitorium (now Western MA Hospital). For a time in the early 1930's, she was employed as a nurse by the Columbia Bicycle Company. Riding a trolley car from "The Hill" to Lozierville where the factory was located, she exchanged waves with a young fellow who lived on East Silver Street. This friendship developed into a marriage between Rose and Joseph J. Knapik. Rose and Joe raised two sons, Joseph born in 1935, and John M. born in 1942.

While bringing up her family, Rose continued to work part-time at Noble Hospital; she also was a private duty nurse which allowed her to work nights and care for her two sons during the day. When Joe and John went off to serve in the Marines, Rose would write letters to the boys from her duty station at the hospital. The letters may have been written intermittently, as she would write ... "oops, have to go and check on so-and-so in Room 214." It was always good to get news from home from Mom.

The Rose Curran Knapik Memorial Scholarship was started in 1984. She died at Noble Hospital in 1983, and she was loved by all who knew her. We wish to continue this remembrance by recognizing those students from our three local high schools who wish to pursue a career in nursing or a health related field. This will be a tribute to Rose.

Rose's story written by: Joseph Knapik, October 2005

From the day he was born, January 9, 1935, Joseph Knapik was a lifelong resident of Westfield. Beginning in his early years, his life was strongly influenced by his Slovak and Irish heritage. One of the highlights of his Westfield High School years was playing football on the WHS team which won the 1949 Peanut Bowl Championship!

Shortly after his 1952 graduation from WHS, Joe enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. He proudly served his country during the Korean War as an Aviation



Ordinance man aboard the USS Coral Sea (CV 43) of the United States Sixth Fleet. Honorably discharged in 1956, Joe served in the Marine Corps Reserves until 1990.

A college education was a priority for Joe following his 1956 discharge. He attended American International College in Springfield and graduated in 1962. He had married Alice Roberts on June 25, 1960, so his life was full, but it got even busier! Joe began as a teacher in the Westfield Public Schools in 1964, earned a Master's degree and his Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies from Westfield State College, and he and Alice had four sons!

Family, career and the Westfield community were the focus of Joe's life. He always felt very, very lucky to share his life with his wonderful wife Alice. His sons, Joseph, Michael, Daniel and Neil, along with their families, were his pride and joy! Joe was passionate about education and remained with the Westfield Public Schools until his retirement in 1998. He served as a Westfield Middle School guidance counselor throughout much of his career. Joe was extremely active in numerous Westfield civic organizations including American Legion Post 124, Slovak Citizens Club, Sons of Erin, Knights of Columbus, past Commandant of the Marine Corps League, and many more.

Written by Alice Knapik and family, April 2014