

HERstory

MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



Woman in History: Shirley Barnard Waters

Looking forward to her 100th birthday this year, Shirley Barnard Waters is not so much a "Woman in History" as someone who faced history head on, learned from it, dealt with what it had to offer, and made her own contributions to it.

Born in Syracuse, she moved to Rome as a tall, thin, bespectacled young teen, attending Rome Free Academy studying foreign languages. She grew up in a newspaper family where discussion of community and world issues was commonplace at the dinner table.

Her father, Brad Barnard, had wanted to be an artist and a few lovely notes from him that remain contain sketches of what he saw in life. She shared his eye and hand. From then on, with a degree in Fine Arts in Painting from Syracuse University, she drew, painted, potted, crafted jewelry, made paper, and sketched faces on napkins to the delight of those she met.

She embraced what the world gave her, including both a Depression and World War II, and made

the best of it. Just after the war, at age 25, she sailed off a converted troop ship, the E.B. Alexander, with an 18-month-old child to join her husband, George, as part of the Army of Occupation in Salzburg, Austria, where she found herself den mother to some 125 young soldiers of the 42nd Division, 222nd Regiment, Anti-tank Company her husband captained.

During the 1950s she mothered four children, later a fifth, and counseled others around a large kitchen table that proved a gathering place for neighborhood children, parents, friends, and civic leaders. Never idle, she involved herself with church, schools, and painting classes with friends, often doing portraits in oil. After her children moved on, she set up a studio to focus on work she either gave away or sold at art shows for the price of the framing.

As the official area American Field Service representative during the 1960s, she helped foreign high school students hosted by area families navigate multi-cultural differences. Many

kept in touch with her after they returned to their home countries.

She felt honored to participate with Griffiss military officers' wives, and other base activities. She helped facilitate the B-52 static display, including the ALCM missile beside it. Her financial support for the community was quiet and substantial.

She was the majority owner of the family-owned Rome Sentinel newspaper, but remained mostly in the background, while George served as publisher. She weighed in heavily during Urban Renewal to assure the new newspaper plant would anchor the new downtown. Fifty years later she would embrace moving newspaper offices to Griffiss Technology Park.

Always an arts advocate, she saw potential for Grace Carpenter's home and, with her husband George, cajoled community leaders to establish the Rome Community Art Center. She helped facilitate cellist Mislav Rostrovich's concert to save the Stanley Theater. On the Board of Munson, Williams, Proctor, she helped conserve its art collection

and increase classes and programs for the public.

Cultivated since childhood in a family that knew many personally and professionally in government circles, Shirley moved easily among them and was highly regarded by them. For many years Shirley served on the NYS Lawyers Fund for Client Protection to protect legal consumers from dishonest practices.

While she graciously accepted the many community, art, and journalism awards she earned, her acceptances invariably held up other women she felt more deserving than she was, citing names and accomplishments. Outside the limelight, she warmly embraced those who sought her out, praised their accomplishments, encouraged their progress, counseling them if asked, and connecting them with others of shared interest.

Because of physical limitations, Shirley now lives in an assisted living facility. By choice her outside contacts are few, but she is fully engaged with those on her floor. As staff says, she still retains a "sunshine soul."



SHIRLEY BARNARD WATERS

Izzo makes history as Rome's first female mayor

BY NICOLE A. HAWLEY
Staff writer

When Mayor Jacqueline M. Izzo ran for office for the first

time back in 2015, she said being a woman didn't make her "different" — it was about being the best person for the job.

Izzo made Rome history becoming the first female mayor, but she said her experience working in government and the private sector was why she felt she should be seen as any other capable candidate. Being a woman wasn't considered a potential obstacle, despite it being a four-candidate race.

"What spurred me to start looking into the mayor's position was because of my business background — I couldn't ignore that the city was very stagnant and had been for several years," reflected Izzo. "We could see the city losing population — we weren't growing new, young entrepreneur businesses. And what we did have seemed to be stuck a little, so I convinced myself something had to change in the community, and we needed something to propel us forward."

"I never thought of being different because I'm a woman. I'm not naive — I thought a little going into the campaign that Rome is 'traditionalistic' — How would they accept a woman as a

leader?," she shared. "I thought I had enough experience in business, and government-wise, and that I could bring in new people to attack the issues with a business mind. But the politicians who say, 'You have to run government like you would run a business' make me laugh. Government doesn't run like a business, and if you understand government, our responsibility is for the taxpayers' money and with that comes checks and balances. It's different from the private sector. When I made a decision for my business, it was my money and my risk, and if I made a mistake, then I was the only one left to clean it up. On the government side, if you make a bad decision, you're affecting 30,000-plus people, so it's very different."

From a very young age, Izzo said she was always community-minded, volunteering with several organizations. She started coaching basketball when just a freshman at Utica College and would continue to coach high schoolers at Rome Catholic, from where she graduated in 1979.



JACQUELINE M. IZZO

Her first taste of work in government was when she volunteered to work on the campaign of former Mayor Carl J. Eilenberg, who went on to serve three terms from 1980-92.

"When I was just out of high school, my first year of college, I got involved in Eilenberg's campaign as a volunteer, and that was my introduction to politics," the mayor said. "Working on that campaign as a young college student was fun, and it felt nice to be doing something out in the community. I was coaching basketball at the time...I was involved with high schoolers while in college and beyond."

One of Izzo's first jobs was as a staff assistant for the Rome Area Chamber of Commerce.

"I got to know a lot of people and of course the chamber is involved in a lot of activities, so I got to learn how the world operated from the business side of things, and from there I left and became Director of Tourism

at the Erie Canal Village at the time," she said.

Izzo would spend 6 1/2 years as the Director of Tourism, seeing the world as a "civil servant and how a government-operated business operated under the confines of government."

She would become a volunteer at Rome Voluntary Action Center and was on the boards and committees of several organizations for her desire to "give back to the community."

Izzo would then go on to become the general manager of the Quality Inn.

"I really got tremendous private sector experience in that job — seeing things and how they operated in the business world," the mayor said. "I was still in the area of tourism. Then I sat on the chamber board for 15 years, and even became chairman."

"Then I opened my business and there was nothing like that at the time," she continued about her medical transcription/dictation company, Upstate New York Professional Services. "I came into a business when women were just coming into the marketplace."

Through owning and operating her business, in addition to serving as president, Izzo said she learned to navigate her own company by seeing eye-to-eye with other people who owned businesses, as well as by dealing with vendors, financial institutions and physical plants.

"They call you president of a company, but what it means is you're the janitor, and maybe at some point you're signing checks," Izzo laughed.

"There's nothing like building a business from an idea, and there's a lot of work and dedication involved, and a lot of times you put your business responsibilities ahead of the leisurely things you want to do in your life, because you can't miss a beat. It was the same at the hotel, so I got used to working like that most of my life. Health care is the same thing — it never closes and people are looking to us 24 hours a day."

When it came to running her mayoral campaign, Izzo used her love and passion for the sport of basketball as her metaphor to build a solid strategic plan.

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Dr. Grabar is the author of *Debunking Howard Zinn: Exposing the Fake History That Turned a Generation against America*, published in 2019. The book reached bestseller status on Amazon. She has been a Resident Fellow at AHI since 2014 where she is a sought after speaker on the common core and writes frequently about education, literature, and political culture.

Mary Grabar was born in Slovenia when it was still part of Communist Yugoslavia and grew up in Rochester, New York. She earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia in 2002 and taught at a number of colleges and universities in Georgia until 2013. While teaching, she founded the Dissident Prof Education Project, a nonprofit reform initiative.

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