

Life Long Involvement to her Community

By Abigail Marin

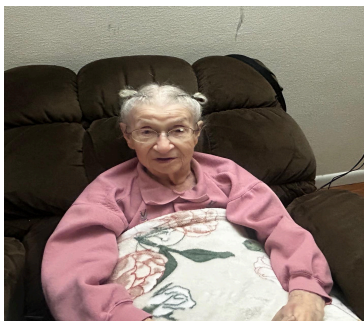
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For more than a century, Martha Collins has watched Greencastle change from a small, quiet town into a community shaped by generations of DePauw University students. Now 101 years old, Collins reflects on a lifetime spent helping neighbors, supporting students and remaining deeply connected to the community she has always called home.

In Greencastle, where neighbors often know each other by name, Collins' life story is closely tied to both the city and DePauw University. She has spent more than a century witnessing the town's growth and transformation. Today, she lives at Asbury Towers Senior Living, where she reflects on a life shaped by local traditions and longtime connections.

"I was born in Greencastle," Collins said. "It was much different back then, but I enjoyed it."

Growing up in the small Indiana town, Collins spent much of her childhood with her father and siblings. She was one of five children three, brothers and one sister, in a close-knit family rooted in the community.



Her connection to DePauw University deepened years later through her family. Her husband, Bruce Collins, worked as a teacher at Greencastle Elementary School before later joining the university's campus cleaning services staff. His position at the university helped open the door for their daughter, Becky Collins, to attend the school.

Becky Collins enrolled at DePauw in 1957 and is now 87 years old. "My mom and dad have always been involved in our community," Becky Collins said.

During her time on campus, Becky Collins was also deeply involved in volunteer work and was a member of the Delta Zeta sorority. Through the organization, she participated in service activities and campus events that connected students with the local community.

"My mom would also help prepare for events, and it made things much easier," Becky Collins said. "Everyone who knew me knew my mom."

Collins has long been deeply involved in the Greencastle community, supporting both local residents and the university.



The Delta Zeta sorority house on East Washington Street was the reconstructed home of two prominent Greencastle historians,

Further Connection

Collins remembers Becky's opportunity to attend DePauw University as an important moment for their family, made possible through her husband's work at the university. However, Collins' connection to DePauw extended far beyond family ties. During the years Becky was a student, Collins often helped other students in small but meaningful ways. In a town where transportation options were limited, she frequently gave rides to college students who needed help getting home.

“I took some of the college kids who needed rides home,” Collins said. “I wanted to do something, and there was not much in town. Usually, students would walk through the weather.”

For many students, those rides were a simple but meaningful act of kindness that helped them feel more connected to the Greencastle community. For students far from home, a ride through town or back to campus could offer warmth, safety and a sense of belonging. Collins said she simply wanted to help wherever she could.

She also spent time helping families connected to the university. While Becky was attending DePauw, Collins cared for the daughter of one of the professors.

“I’m too old to remember her name, though,” she said with a laugh.

Now living at Asbury Towers Senior Living, Collins continues to stay connected to the university as she has for decades. She regularly receives visits from Bonner Scholars and sorority members.

“I love visiting Martha and hearing her stories,” said Cora Gibson, a member of the Alpha Chi Omega sorority at DePauw.

Gibson said Collins has maintained strong ties to the community even when she is no longer directly involved in daily activities. Collins continues to encourage students to engage with Greencastle.

“I encourage everyone to talk to residents and get involved,” Collins said. “It can be as simple as supporting local businesses around campus.”

After more than a century in Greencastle, Collins has seen generations of students arrive at DePauw, build memories in the town and eventually move on. Through her family, her kindness and her willingness to help both students and residents, Collins' life reflects the deep and lasting connection between the university and the community that surrounds it.