



Mary Ford (Kern)

I was introduced to the term “Appalachian” in a sociology class at Ohio University. Several years later I realized that I am an Appalachian. I was born in Washington County in Southeastern Ohio. When I was 7 my family moved to Pittsburgh and stayed for 5 years. That is where I first became a Pittsburgh Pirate Fan. When I was 12 we moved to Upper Arlington where I lived until I was 21. I was very fortunate my parents cared about my education and moved to Upper Arlington for the good schools. I have many fond memories of Jones Junior

High, UAHS, and the friends I made there. Among some of my memories are the choir productions.

After a brief marriage in Athens, I returned to Washington County where I have lived for the past 44 years. Though my marriage was unsuccessful, it produced 2 fabulous children. I opted to remain in Washington County to raise them and I have never regretted that decision. They bloomed beautifully in this rich area. My son, his wife, and 4 children reside in Southern Florida. My daughter and her 2 sons live outside Charlottesville, Virginia. Both are happy and successful in their personal and professional lives. I am very proud of them and their accomplishments.

I retired as Director of Adult Basic and Literacy Education for Marietta City Schools in 2009. What a dream job!! Through my work in Adult Basic Education I had the opportunity to meet many remarkable people-people who wanted to make a change in their lives. I worked with individuals who wished to improve their basic skills in reading and math. Many of my students studied to take the high school equivalency exam (GED) I also worked with immigrants wanting to improve their English and earn their US Citizenship. Some of my former students have become good friends of mine One of my dearest friends is a Vietnamese lady who came to my program in the late 70's. After all these years, we remain good friends and I value her friendship. I believe I learned as much, if not more, from my students as they did from me. Many went on to pursue college degrees or other job training. I still remember one student who wanted to learn to read so he could read bedtime stories to his son. During one of my mother's hospital stays, I was pleased to see one of her nurses was a former student of mine.

As long as I can remember, I wanted to be a mother and a teacher. Fortunately, I was able to achieve both and have been very happy. I have been blessed with a loving family, supportive colleagues, and loyal friends. What more could I want?!?

Since my retirement, I have been loving and enjoying my grandchildren, restoring my family home (100+ year old house where my father was raised), raising a serious kitchen garden, catching up on hand work, and cheering on my Pittsburgh Pirates. I think I need Betty Mathis Sproule's book. As of now I plan to attend the reunion and catch up with former classmates.