

DONOR STORIES

ZITA L. HUMBERT

“Zita L. Humbert Memorial Scholarship Fund”

“Home is where the heart is.” This age old adage rang true for Zita Luella Humbert during her 94 years of a life well-lived in Volga, Iowa.

Zita, the second daughter of Michael J. and Anna A. (Glennon) Conboy, was born on October 4, 1905 on her family’s farm north of Volga.

Throughout her youth, Zita attended Volga City Public School where she developed a passion for journalism and practiced her writing skills whenever possible. She was a proud graduate in 1924 as a member of the

first high school class to graduate from the newly constructed Volga City Public School building. Her

father, a member of the school board at that time, helped in the design and construction in 1923 of the new school facility.



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Zita had a passion for learning and decided to continue her education at Iowa Normal School (now the University of Northern Iowa) in Cedar Falls. After her graduation from this institution, Zita taught in rural Clayton County schools including the Stone School in Sperry Township and the Duff School in Highland Township.

Following her marriage to Forest H. “Buck” Humbert in 1932, the couple farmed in the area before moving into Volga. Once they were back in town, Zita worked in several local businesses among them Tom Looney’s Grocery, Harlan Sober’s Essanay Hatchery, Lee Candee’s Cloverfarm Store, W.W. Wenger’s Tavern & Locker, Louise Chisteleit’s Modern Cafe and the Iowa Telephone and Telegraph Office managed by Martha Duff.

Following fellow community member Leota Germar’s World War II Army enlistment, Zita replaced her as the local postal clerk during Otto Germar’s tenure as Postmaster. Zita succeeded Mr. Germar as Volga Postmaster on October 1, 1947, maintaining that position until her retirement in 1975 following 31 years of postal employment in Volga.

After her retirement, Zita continued to build on her news correspondent career which had begun in high school, writing for Karl Konzen, owner of the Volga City News. When the newspaper became part of the Clayton County Register, Zita continued writing about the weekly news in the community of Volga. Her reporting efforts spanned 75 years, most of it written for the three generations of the Griffith family. She also served as the Volga correspondent submitting community articles to the Cedar Rapids Gazette, Dubuque Telegraph Herald, Oelwein Daily Register and the Des Moines Register.

Zita truly did make a difference in her community by becoming a voice for civic engagement citing that helping others was a moral imperative and a duty as well as one of the greatest joys of life.

She was a lifelong member of Sacred Heart Parish even assisting in the transporting in 1924 of the church's cornerstone from Clermont in the back seat of her father's touring car. For approximately 65 years she served as church organist, playing for local family weddings and funerals too numerous to count. Zita was also a longtime member of the Altar and Rosary Society, the National Council of Catholic Women, the Catholic Order of Foresters and Catholic Daughters of the Americas. In recognition of her many years of devotion to the parish, Zita was awarded an Apostolic Blessing by Pope John Paul II in 1991.

Other organizations of which Zita was a member include the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Volga Senior Citizens, a 33-year member of the Volga Community Development Club, a 50-year member of the Iowa Federated Woman's Club and a lifelong member of the Democratic party. During World War II she worked as a representative of the office of Price Administration and as a member of the Ground Observation Corps for the Aircraft Warning Service.

For many years, Zita's strong interest in Volga's families and events made her a living source of community history; a wealth of knowledge of a place she was proud to call home. Much of the information she had gathered over the years as well as her experiences were used in the compilation of the History of Clayton County Schools, as well as A History of Volga City, Iowa. Her passion, concern, and love for her community stayed with her all of her 94 years until her death on Wednesday, September 13, 2000.

Because of her undying love for her community of Volga and her sincere desire to share information through her articles, a scholarship was established at the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa. This scholarship, preferably given to a young woman, will reward a graduate of Clayton County High School who plans to pursue a degree in journalism. The student selected will also be asked to articulate through an essay their concept of civic engagement and responsibility in their community. Those who understand the importance of such involvement and passion certainly reflect the spirit of Zita Luella Humbert.

Over the years, many people have attested that a person's heart always finds a way home. For Zita Luella Humbert "home" was never far away and the impact that her life made in the community of Volga is sure to influence young writers for years to come.