



Frances Mary Schoolcraft - *Education and Religion*

Frances M. Schoolcraft was born in Wheeling in 1948 at the Ohio Valley Medical Center. She attended Warwood High School, graduating in 1965, and continued to West Virginia University where she graduated in 1969 in Speech and Theater Education and continued to get a master's degree plus 45 hours. She also attended the University of North Carolina and the University of Southern Colorado for summer workshops.

She began her teaching career (which lasted almost four decades) at Triadelphia High School until the newly-constructed Wheeling Park High School opened. At Triadelphia she taught English and theater and was the coach of speech and theater activities. At that time there were five students in speech class and 12 students in theater. The team competed in one tournament.

At the consolidated Wheeling Park High, she created the Speech and Theater Curriculum, offering opportunities to all four schools that were joining as one. She also served as the head speech and theater coach and the department chair of Performing and Visual Arts from 1976 to her retirement in 2004. When the program first began at Wheeling Park High, there were about 10 speech students and 15 theater students in the extracurricular program. As time passed, these numbers grew to some 100 speech students and 500 theater students in the Speech and Theater Curriculum program. Many of these students went on to careers in professional speech or theater.

With her speech and theater background, this educator had many opportunities outside the traditional school setting. She taught speech at West Virginia Northern Community College and held classes at the penitentiary with the guards and inmates as students. The firemen of Wheeling offered two classes which she taught. In the West Virginia Forensic League, she served as treasurer or president. In the National Forensic League, she earned a Double Diamond, which is awarded for the number of speech

students coached. In addition, she created programs for middle school students, such as the Annual Middle School Speech and Theater Event where young students are coached by the high school students and then compete as they would in a high school speech tournament.

In theater she was a guest lecturer at the Lakeview Theater and Youth Camp. She was an adjunct musical theater director of "Grease" at West Liberty University and was the co-creator and presenter at an in-service in theater for West Virginia teachers. At times she also served as a judge for the West Virginia One Act Play Competition. During her tenure, she directed more than 100 performances, including "Charlie Brown", "Seussical", "Fiddler on the Roof", and "West Side Story." Examples of out-of-school learning include a program taking one act plays for presentation to elementary schools and taking students to New York City each year to see Broadway shows.

She was selected as Wheeling Park High School's Teacher of the Year in 1993, and the Visual and Performing Arts Department won the Governor's Award for an Exemplary School of the Arts. Also, she was selected as a Legend of Warwood, an award given to individuals from Warwood who have had an exemplary career. In her last year of teaching, she earned the U.S. Attorney Award for the Tradition of Excellence for Academic Achievement and Dedication to the Personal and Professional Development of Local Students. Despite these personal accolades, she would say that highlight of her career was her Wheeling Park High School speech team winning first place in the State of West Virginia speech and debate tournament for 25 consecutive years.

After retirement, she was employed by the Loews' hotels, which has 17 hotels that are dedicated as recreational and/or business hotels. She developed a curriculum to work with individuals in the marketing departments in public speaking, communication, and creativity. While working there with the marketing departments she won the Loew's Excellence in Sales Award.

In her retirement, she hears from many former students who have succeeded in their careers because of the knowledge they gained in her speech and theater classes. This is the joy of teaching: knowing you made a difference.