

META HANNAH RIESTER

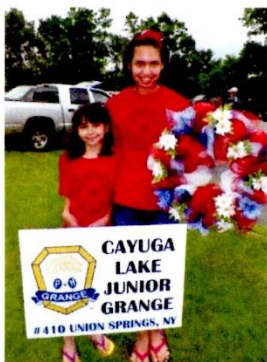
Meta Riester, born August 5, 1946 at Auburn, Mercy Hospital is the daughter of Bernard J. Riester, Sr. and Esther Corey Riester. Both her parents were from Cayuga County farm families. The Riester surname is of German origin, meaning 'plow handle' or having something to do with farming. Bernard's family farm was located on Dunning Avenue in Auburn. They sold apples, cider, honey and the family provided apples for children and families of St. Alphonsus School. Esther was born at home on Black Rock Road in King Ferry, NY. The surname Corey is reportedly of Scottish origin and derives from the Gaelic word "coire", meaning "cauldron", used to describe a circular hanging valley on a mountain. Except for Meta's grandmother and her sister who were born in the United States, the Corey siblings were born in Switzerland.

Meta's parents purchased land on Routes 5 & 20, one mile west of Auburn. The property included a stone building that Bernard used for plumbing, heating and puttering with electronics and refrigeration, which, in turn, became the foundation of the family business. Known for his skills even at a young age, he was 25 when hired to teach blueprint reading for the National Youth Administration (NYA) at the Auburn Theological Seminary now Willard Chapel. The agency was formed after the depression as part of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal". It was created in 1941 as a national youth development program that provided millions of young people ages 16-25 with jobs and job training. It also included community service work, recreation, remedial education and real-life lessons. Bernard died just a few months after his 99 birthday on 9/9/2016. He remained involved in the

appliance/repair work until he passed. He met Esther while they both worked at ALCO, down the street from their home. They were married June 23, 1945. Their business, still serving the entire north central region of the state, was an outgrowth of their unique skills and interests. Esther worked in the office and was the saleswoman of the family. According to Meta, 'she could sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo'. At one point, Esther even sold the appliances from her own kitchen saying she could get along with just three items: a dishwasher, a microwave, and a refrigerator. Meta's younger brother B.J. took over the business. He expanded it to include computer sales, electric tractors and microwaves, the latter being at the time, unfamiliar appliances to many people in the area who thought they were 'mysterious and scary'. He modernized the operation, including getting rid of the old party line telephone service and expanded the territory served by the business to cover a region that extends from Syracuse to Rochester, through the Finger Lakes and north to Lake Ontario. While Meta is still a part owner of the business, she chose to follow her own path. She made her way to her calling as a kindergarten teacher of 30 years.

Even though the family lived on Clark Street Rd. (Routes 5 & 20) in Auburn, their location made them part of the Union Springs School District from which Meta graduated in 1964. She played all four school sports available to girls at the time: field hockey, basketball, volleyball and softball. She was part of several school clubs: Yorkers, student teachers, marching band color guard, chorus and performed in school plays. In high school, she played volleyball for Mrs. O'Conner, with whom she later coached for thirteen years after she had been hired to teach kindergarten at her alma mater in 1971. Meta remembers the girls on her teams as dedicated individuals that won several championships. They played, traveled, and shared holidays with each other. Meta's school and post graduate activities were part of family traditions. Her mother Esther played on a championship basketball team in her King Ferry high school. Esther was one of thirteen graduates in her senior class. Those thirteen got together for dinner once a year until the next to the last one passed. Esther was that one. Meta has played a major role in continuing that tradition with her own classmates. This affinity for group participation and cohesiveness also became hallmarks of Meta's extensive community service efforts over many decades.

Meta always knew she wanted to be a teacher and in particular a K-1 teacher. Combining classwork at SUNY Geneseo, Cayuga Community College, and SUNY Brockport, she taught in Brockport for four years before coming home to 'the Springs'. She is particularly proud of the FOSPA program through which pre-kindergarten children and their parents prepare for the transition from home to school in the fall. The program ran for 20 years and successfully graduated 20-25 students each year. Meta has felt particularly rewarded by recognizing many of the same faces graduating from high school years later. One might think that after teaching and coaching, the last thing one might choose to occupy time is working with youth in a quasi-educational program. While Meta was still in high school, she became the leader of Cayuga Lake Junior Grange #410. The program included girls and boys, ages 5-14, from Union Springs and Southern Cayuga. In the beginning they met at the Ledyard Methodist Church where Meta had played the organ since high



school. The club location later switched to A.J. Smith Elementary School. The Grange or Patrons of Husbandry was founded in Fredonia, NY in 1867 to advance methods of agriculture, as well as to promote the social and economic needs for farmers and rural folks in the United States. Huron Junior Grange founded 1888 in NY was part of the National Grange and one of the first national youth organizations in the country. The Grange allowed women to vote and hold offices in the organization before they could legally vote. Junior Grange develops cooperation and concern for others. It teaches respect for country and reverence for God. The members entered talent contests as well as craft/art and photo competitions. Cayuga Lake Jr. Grange was recognized as the TOP Junior Grange in the Nation two years in a row. Locally, the club, under Meta's leadership, has participated in the community fundraisers efforts, Christmas caroling; selling hotdogs at the first Route 90 Garage sale, attending Junior Grange camp, going on mystery rides and learning about their surroundings. Meta tried to lead generations of youth in the area through meaningful experiences. It is impossible to measure the impact of such programs on a community or any community to which those students landed, but it surely is one of those.

