

November 2019

Dear Friend,

My name is Germaine Humbrecht, and I am the daughter of a long-time Peace Village resident, Germaine Krugman. My mother moved to Peace Village in 1999 from our family home just five miles away in Palos Heights. It may sound like her world was very small, but that was hardly the case.

Germaine was born in 1921 and raised in a small town near the center of France called Montceau-les-Mines. Germaine often described her childhood as typical for the time, including that at twelve years old, she finished sixth grade and went to work in a stocking factory to help her family.

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### ***Life During War Time***

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Everything in her life changed when Germany invaded France in 1940. Germaine continued to work in the factory now making stockings for the German Army. During the occupation, German soldiers executed her father for not cooperating with a round-up of civilian weapons. Germaine was ordered to leave, so she moved to Paris to live with her aunt. In Paris, she married her childhood sweetheart, Fernand, but became a widow at age 22 when Fernand died after being interned in a German work camp in Normandy.

After Fernand's death, Germaine continued to live with her aunt, where she met my father, Bill Krugman, an American soldier on leave in Paris. She thought he was just another flirtatious soldier even after he announced he was going to come back and marry her. She spoke no English, he spoke very little French, and he lived in Chicago.

They were married in Paris on June 13, 1946. After the war, Germaine arrived in the United States on the SS Henry Gibbons, a war bride ship. She was allowed one suitcase and she wore a tag tied to her coat identifying her and her destination. It would be twenty years before she returned to France to see her family.



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### ***Life in America***

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After moving to Chicago with Bill, Germaine learned to speak English, cook American food, and celebrated American holiday traditions. She became an American citizen in 1948. Germaine was so proud to be an American and for the rest of her life has considered America to be her home.

Germaine and Bill settled into living the American dream so many young families sought. They had three daughters and Bill had a good job. Germaine worked as a seamstress, and then in 1956, was hired by the Federal Reserve Bank in Chicago where she worked for the next 32 years. They moved out of Chicago and settled into a home in Palos Heights.

In 1993, life changed again. Germaine suddenly lost most of her vision to an uncommon form of macular degeneration. Things worsened when Bill was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lung cancer in September. He died on December 16, 1993 at age 74.

Germaine, at seventy-two years, was resourceful and resilient. She wanted to remain in the home she loved, and with the help of family, friends, and neighbors she was able to have her wish. Eventually, as Germaine's only child living locally, it became my job to have "The Talk" with her about her future. The talk, of course, was the conversation many of us have had with our parents about selling the family home, disposing of a lifetime of accrued contents, money, and the elephant in the room: Independent Living. After months of talking and visiting every facility in the south suburbs, Germaine agreed to make the move.

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### *Life At Peace Village*

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After she made the decision and selected her apartment, Germaine was happy and optimistic. I, of course, worried about everything. I shared my concerns with the staff and they always took time to listen. Very early on, I learned we could put ourselves in their hands and I knew Germaine had chosen the right home. She learned to navigate the entire facility and was so busy that we needed to make dates with her. Life in her "little house on the prairie" was good.

*Germaine chose Peace Village in 1999 when she was seventy-eight years old because "it felt like home."*

Gradually however, changes crept into Germaine's behavior. After eighteen years in Independent Living, I realized Germaine needed more help in order to live safely. I believed Assisted Living was the answer, but I was concerned about how to afford the additional cost. Germaine's savings were declining monthly to cover the cost of outside caregivers and now, there would be an increased cost for her care. As always, I turned to Peace Village staff for information and advice. They assured me there were options. Through a combination of changes, including a monthly contribution from the Lora Contorno Benevolent Fund (Lora's Fund), we were able to move Germaine into Assisted Living at ninety-seven years old.

During Germaine's first days in her new apartment, staff members came to greet her and make her feel comfortable. I was surprised at how many of them already knew Germaine from Independent Living. Before long, however, she began to stay in her apartment and declined meals and activities. Assisted Living could no longer provide the level of care she needed.



For the third time in twenty years, I came to the Peace Village staff for help with understanding what was best for Germaine and how to make it happen. Lora's Fund once again made it possible for my mom to stay at Peace Village. Germaine transitioned to Memory Care earlier this fall at the age of ninety-eight. She seems so happy in her environment.

For my mom, Germaine, Peace Village is as much a part of her as her Palos Heights home. For that reason I am asking for your help today. Please consider making a donation to help residents, like my mom, live their best lives in the place they call home, Peace Village. Even now Germaine looks at her apartment, still furnished with her furniture, and tells me, as she has for decades: "If everyone in America could live in a beautiful place like this, how lucky they would be."

Thank you in advance for your generosity and helping to make my mom's and other residents' dreams, come true!

With heartfelt gratitude,

*Germaine Humbrecht and family*