

Gertrude Virginia “Virginia” Seiberling (1899-1971)

Gertrude Virginia Seiberling (Virginia) was born on November 28, 1899. She attended Westover School in Middlebury, Connecticut, graduating in 1919. On October 4th of that same year, Virginia married John (Jack) Littlefield Handy in the Dell at Stan Hywet Hall. Jack came from an old New England family that had connections in Cleveland and Akron. He was a rubber import broker, stock broker, and founded one of the first head-hunting companies in New York City in the late 1940s. The couple lived predominately in and around New York City, but maintained a summer residence in Barnstable, Massachusetts.

Virginia and Jack had six children: John (Jack), Jr., born on August 14, 1920; Edward (Ned), born on September 29, 1922; Marion, born on March 16, 1925; Virginia (Tinkerbell), born on June 13, 1929; Anabel, born on August 1, 1930; and Sylvia, born on June 21, 1931.

Virginia followed in her mother’s footsteps, cultivating interests in music and art. She took singing lessons and art classes throughout her life and cultivated these interests in her children. The Handy family travelled extensively in the early years of their marriage, making a six-month trip around the world that began in Europe and continued throughout the Far East in 1921 and 1922. They returned to Europe several times when their children were young.

The family experienced dramatic financial highs and lows, struggling throughout the 1930s and 1940s. F.A. and Gertrude stepped in to help by inviting the Handy daughters to stay at Stan Hywet Hall. The three youngest – Tinkerbell, Anabel and Sylvia – moved to Stan Hywet in September 1935 and stayed through the end of the year. All four girls returned in the summer of 1938 and stayed through the academic year. Marion returned home first but the youngest three remained for another school year in Akron. In the fall of 1940, Virginia accepted a position as a teacher at Sea Pines, a co-educational boarding school in Brewster, Massachusetts. She taught in the Lower School and also helped with the choral classes. Unfortunately the school experienced a devastating fire that spring and Virginia’s position was not renewed.

Jack’s financial situation improved when he was hired in 1942 by McKinsey & Company Management Consultants in New York City which began his career in head-hunting. Two years later, he founded his own firm called Handy Associates. At the same time, Jack and Virginia’s sons enlisted in the military at the outset of World War II. Jack Handy, Jr. enlisted in the U.S. Army in the 10th Mountain Division. Ned Handy served as a crew member on a B-52 Liberator. His plane was shot down over Germany in April 1944. He was captured and imprisoned at Stalag 17, a German prisoner of war camp near Creams, Austria. Both men survived the war.

Jack and Virginia continued to divide their time between New York City and Barnstable, Massachusetts in the later decades of their life. Virginia passed away on May 17, 1971, of heart-related ailments and Jack died in September 1980.