



Billie E. Rochford

May 23, 1916 - May 3, 2016

Billie E. Rochford, age 99 of Hobart, IN, formerly of Gary, passed away May 3, 2016. She was a member of Marquette Park Methodist Church of Miller. She was preceded in death by her husband, Oliver Rochford; brother-Cliff (Pat) Johns; sisters-in-law- Mary Rochford, Martha Rochford, Elizabeth Detterline. She is survived by her nephew, Kevin Rochford. Funeral service Monday, May 9th at 12 noon at Burns Funeral Home, 10101 Broadway, Crown Point. Friends may visit from 10-12 p.m. prior to the service. Interment Ridgelawn-Mount Mercy cemetery in Gary, IN. www.burnsfuneral.com

Cemetery Details

Ridge Lawn- Mount Mercy Cemetery

4401 W. Ridge Rd.
Gary, IN

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 9. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Burns Funeral Home & Crematory - Crown Point
10101 Broadway
Crown Point, IN 46307
(219) 769-0044
info@burnsfuneral.com
<https://www.burnsfuneral.com/>

Funeral Service

MAY 9. 12:00 PM (CT)

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Tribute Wall

“*Billie was an amazing woman who had an interesting and even secret life before we all knew her on Vanderburg Street in Gary, Indiana. To us she was Ollie's wife, a sweet woman, "aunt," and neighbor who smiled a lot and spoke with a slight southern drawl. To Hitler, she was probably more than a headache.*

She was born in Rutherford, Tennessee on May 23, 1916 as "Billie B. Johns." There is no mention of her father's name in any of the records, and while in Tennessee "Billie B" lived her Mom, Grandparents (Hettie and William Akin, both born in 1866) and step brother Clifton D. Johns.

She then moved to Longview, Texas with her Mom (Bessie Akin-Johns-Nisbitt, born in 1894 - she lived to be over 100) and Stepdad (Joe Nisbitt), who was 15 years older than her Mom. Billie graduated from high school there in 1935 and she also changed her name to Billie J. Nisbitt.

In High School in Texas, Billie was in the choral club, little theater club and tennis club. She worked as a secretary clerk in a bank after high school and continued to live with her Mom Bessie and Stepdad Joe.

In her twenties, she was recruited out of her job at the bank because of her extraordinary memory and talents with figures and numbers and into the women's intelligence core in WWII and she served as a spy for the U.S. against the German enemy. She even traveled to Europe.

In 1945, at age 29, she married Ollie Rochford who was 31 at the time. She met him while he was stationed in Texas in the army. In 1948, they moved to downtown Gary, Indiana where Billie worked as a book keeper. In 1951, they moved to Vanderburg Street in Gary (Miller).

Billie was sharp as a tack and had a photographic memory, which

served her well as a WWII spy. It certainly served her well in the bridge games she played with the neighbors on Vanderburg Street. Billie knew everything about everyone on our street (and she seemed to love us all, even my sister Nora, who was a terror) and yet we knew very little about her real life.

There was so much more to Billie than we knew - the women spies in WWII took unbelievable risks - and what was it like growing up with a mother who had been divorced in the 19-teens in Tennessee?

I wish that I had spent more time talking to her when I had had the chance.

May she rest in peace and may we all remember the real Billie Johns Nisbitt Rochford for a long time to come.

Mary Beth Glenn



Mary Beth Glenn - May 10, 2016 at 01:11 AM

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Mary Beth Glenn - May 10, 2016 at 12:03 AM

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“ *Billie was a wonderful person and a cornerstone of Vanderburg Street! She always had a smile for everybody. She served in WWII in intelligence, which is where she met her husband Ollie. It's sad that she spent so many years in a nursing home in the end.*

Mary Beth Glenn - May 09, 2016 at 02:45 PM