

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile Series

by Julie Ricciardi *with a lot of help from Frances

Frances M. Schultz '76HS '78C

Journalist, speaker, taste-maker, world traveler, hostess, southerner, Sunday painter, and style enthusiast!

New York City, New York

Born to be a Saint

As a fifth generation Saint, attending Saint Mary's was a foregone conclusion for Frances Schultz '76HS '78C. Born in Tarboro, North Carolina, she moved around the country after her mother re-married a Marine Corps fighter pilot. Though her roots will always remain there, the bug to explore everything seemed to take hold early in life.

Living away from home as a four-year boarder in Smedes also provided Frances with the opportunity to be a counselor that lead to her meeting her best friend, to this day, Elizabeth Stewart Long '78C. Frances' deepening roots also extend to her sister and fellow graduate, Duvall Schultz Fuqua '79HS – a sister and Saint sister bond that continues to grow for this legacy family.

At Saint Mary's, Frances participated in every possible activity and never said no to an opportunity, which meant many leadership opportunities, making friends, and being creative. As president of the Student Government Association, her life became more structured. She also treasured time in the Circle, Beacon, serving on Vestry, and playing on athletic teams. She even enjoyed her attempts at being a fully-fledged Caperette member, which she still reports as a "benevolent" invitation to join. All of this led to her appointment to the Board of Trustees in 2006 where she continued to foster her passion and connection to alumnae near and far.

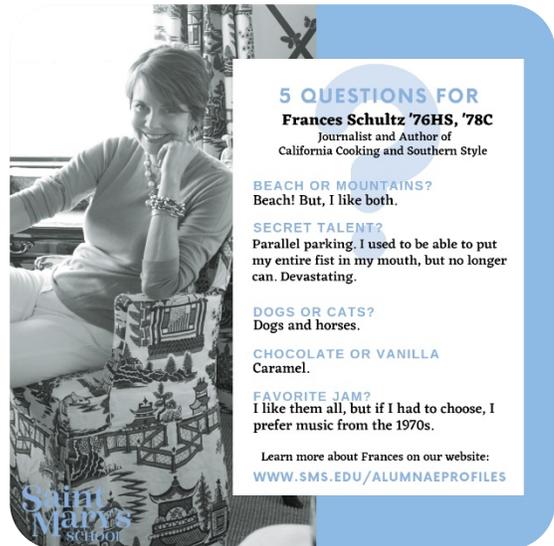
Life Goes On

After graduating from Saint Mary's in 1978, Frances enrolled at the University of Virginia, married the year after she graduated, moved to Richmond, and began her career in journalism working for *Style Weekly*. Being authentic is one of her greatest strengths, and with her divorce in 1987, she began free-lancing writing and traveled all over the world for two years.

Remember the travel bug? Frances shared that she moved to Atlanta in 1990 and worked for *Southern Homes* magazine. "I had a great ride there until I lost a power struggle and was sacked!" she explains. "Be careful what you ask for, but that's what allowed me to write my first book, *Atlanta at Home*, and then my second, *Atlanta at Table*. And, I'm still writing books."

Frances' tenacity led her to freelance for *Veranda* magazine, which had been fairly recently founded, and which to this day is one of the most elegant shelter magazines out there.

"I'm very proud of my work with *Veranda* – well, with everyone I ever worked with, to tell you the truth!" Frances says.



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A year 2000 move to become the New York editor of *Veranda*, Frances lived through the tragedy of 9-11. She also began hosting Turner South television's production of *Southern Living Presents*. Not long into what Frances recalls was a fun time of her life, she developed breast cancer.

"While not what I expected, it did mean I didn't have to worry about my hair on camera, because my wigs always looked good! I'm fine now, thank heaven, and thank God."

Nearly five years into her New York adventure, a friend and veteran magazine editor was charged with the makeover of *House Beautiful* magazine, the oldest continuously published shelter magazine in the country. He brought Frances on board, and as one can imagine, it was a thrilling opportunity.

"I wrote for every issue for the next three years or so," she explains.

Finding Frances

Things might have just been a little too perfect, says Frances. "Because life went off the rails," she says. "I'd describe it as not quite what one would see on *Inside Edition* or in the *Inquirer*, but I – admittedly – made some...what do they call them nowadays? Oh, yes... poor life choices."

In the span of three years, Frances suffered losses. "Both my darlin' mother (Ruth Clark '48HS) and my beloved uncle (Bill Clark, former Saint Mary's trustee and father of Gray Clark Stoughton '78HS, '80C) died suddenly and unexpectedly," she explains. "And, then my father died from cancer. While I was reeling through all of that, I dated the wrong guy, became engaged to another wrong guy, bought a house that had everything wrong with it but its charm – *kinda like those old boyfriends, now that I think of it!*"

To top things off, Frances accepted what she describes as "the wrong job" because it was 2008 and it paid well, but she just wasn't cut out for the position and left within the year.

The Rebound

For Frances, it was time to make lemonade out of lemons. "That, or crawl into a hole and suck my thumb – which I most certainly was caught doing on many occasions!" she says and laughs. "I look at the dear members of my class and what they've also been through; lives that ended way too soon or lost children, and the list goes on and on."

Frances understands that not many on this earth get to be 50-something without having life altering experiences. Knowing she had deep abiding friendships became a pivotal moment in her life, which centered her during the rockiest time of her life.

"That time presented me the opportunity to renovate a home in need of similar repair, all of which then lead to my writing a critically acclaimed book, *The Bee Cottage*. There were speaking tours and I found the true love of my life."

Strength in Friendship

Friends are especially important during times of crisis and turbulence, and those friends made at Saint Mary's during formative times of life are simply impossible to replace. She says rebounding was less about her and more about what she needed to give to others.

"Not to diminish the importance of my Saint Mary's education, because that speaks for itself. But lately, I'm really thinking about friends and the giving of one's self to others, to relationships, to communities, to something outside ourselves, and to something greater than ourselves," she explains. "Because to thrive in mid- and later life, these are the things we must do. Not because they are good for us or make us feel good – though they are and they do – but because they are the *right* things to do, because they are what we *must* do to be fully and completely who we are in this one precious life. This is what it means to meet our maker in this life, not as in to die, but as in to live fully and to embrace the light in us that never dies, to embrace our own divinity if you will."

For Frances, staying involved at Saint Mary's and its alumnae, students and faculty ticks all the boxes she now sets for her life goals.

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"Involvement with one's school, maybe especially because it is Saint Mary's, brings with it friendships and all sorts of relationships, as well as opportunities to volunteer and be of service," she says. "If one feels called, it can also bring engagement with a greater community of schools and organizations, of spirit, of God, and of future generations."

Frances is emphatic and says, "Think of all that! If someone out there is looking for a way to be of service, I can think of no way more noble, worthwhile, or fun than to be involved with Saint Mary's. Financial support is meaningful, too, of course, and vital to the survival of the school. We have a special opportunity to shine here in the coming campaign, and it feels good to give, period."

Throughout all her life experiences, Frances never lost her sense of humor. She is adept at knowing life *will* throw you lemons and curveballs, but when those come now, she has a martini glass and a catcher's mitt on hand to change the situational landscape – all while keeping Saint Mary's in her heart.

Saint Mary's alumnae like Frances Schultz '76HS '78C graduate with a foundation of skills, knowledge, and integrity to help them find success, no matter what they choose in life to do. Alumnae like her are agents for positive change in their communities, and we are grateful for the deep commitment of service, connection, and giving Frances has for the Saints. We also look forward to watching her soar through life's twists and turns, while also keeping 900 Hillsborough always on top of mind.

To keep up with Frances, learn about her speaking engagements, and congratulate her on her latest book *California Cooking and Southern Style* (scheduled for release on Nov. 19, 2019), check out www.franceseschultz.com. And, if you haven't connected with her in some time, email her via her website; she would love to hear from you!

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