

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

by Margaret McGlohon '81C

Mary Foy Ragsdale '77HS '79C

*Owner, Ragsdale Renovations, LLC
Smithfield, N.C.*

A Perfect Fit

Mary Foy Ragsdale '77HS '79C grew up in Lake City, S.C. She always wanted to go off to school, and after she and her parents visited a couple of boarding schools, Saint Mary's reigned supreme!

"I knew I'd found my school the moment I stepped foot on that campus," she says. "Saint Mary's turned out to be the perfect fit for me."

Mary Foy's Saint Mary's legacy is long and includes her grandmother (for whom she was named), several great aunts, her mother Carolyn Foy Ragsdale '54HS '56C, her aunt Tricia Armstrong Foy '60HS '62C and sister The Rev. Liza Ragsdale Ragsdale '79HS, as well as several cousins, Sutton Foy Boney '90HS, Carolyn Foy Evans '91HS, and Caroline M. Ragsdale '82HS.

"As a high school student during my 11th and 12th grade years, I lived in Smedes Hall, on second middle and second west," she recalls. "From the fall of 1977 to May 1979 while in college, I lived on second floor Cruikshank and then third floor Holt."

Mary Foy was also engaged in many student clubs, organizations, and activities. "I was a member of the Granddaughters Club, sang in the Chorale and served as a chalice bearer, and was elected as Fire Marshall my college freshman year. In high school, I was inducted into Beacon and named secretary, inducted into The Order of the Circle during college, and I also went through confirmation classes conducted by the Rev. Starke Dillard and confirmed in the Saint Mary's chapel."

Mary Foy also had dreams of playing on the tennis team at Saint Mary's and attended Ms. Mary Lou Jones' tennis camp during part of her summer vacation after 11th-grade ended.

"I had hoped I would improve my game enough to make the team when I arrived back for 12th grade," she explains. "I learned a great deal and my game did improve; just not enough to make the team."

Mary Foy says she realized her tennis game wasn't up to the caliber of the girls who did make the team. "But, after tryouts were finished, I was chosen to serve as manager of the team that went undefeated for two straight years!"

In 2017, Mary Foy attended the Saint Mary's Athletic Hall of Fame inaugural induction ceremony. "I was honored and proud to have been part of the tennis teams inducted into the Hall of Fame that year, alongside Mary Lou Jones as coach."

She also carries with her many fond memories of her four years at Saint Mary's, including spending



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time on and off-campus with friends, hall meetings and parties, eating meals together in the dining hall, chapel services, building relationships with faculty members and the administrative staff, chats with Mr. Dillard in his office, and says, "I also remember that special Saint Mary's feeling that all Saint Mary's girls know of so well!"

From Teaching to Renovating: A Life Filled with Discovery

After graduating from the junior college, Mary Foy enrolled at Coastal Carolina and then transferred to the University of Georgia (UGA) where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics and a major in Child Development. The summer after graduating from UGA, she worked on Nantucket Island with several friends she'd met at the college.

After the fun summer in Nantucket, attending the Katharine "Katie" Gibbs School in Boston, M.A., was next on her agenda, which led to her first "real job" as a sales assistant for two stock brokers at E.F. Hutton in Atlanta.

"But, my interest and love of children soon drew me away from the business world and into teaching," she recalls.

As an educator, Mary Foy taught preschool, Kindergarten, first, second, third, and fourth grades. "I taught in Atlanta, Ga, and in Myrtle Beach, Pawleys Island, Charleston, and John's Island, S.C."

While teaching at the Trinity School in Atlanta, Mary Foy would head downtown after her workday ended to attend graduate classes at Georgia State University (GSU). There, she earned a master's degree in Education.

She also spent some of her time working for interior design firms in both Myrtle Beach and Charleston. "After I was married and living in Myrtle Beach, I operated a personalized stationery and gift business out of my home."

Her work history also included serving almost four years as a nanny for a wonderful family in Raleigh, making a daily commute from Smithfield, N.C., until the family moved to Asheville. Today, Mary Foy resides back in Smithfield, where she moved to live with and care for her mother who has Macular Degeneration. Mary Foy's son, Layton, is a college student and also lives in Smithfield, just a couple of streets over from his mother and his grandmother. Together, Mary Foy and her mom share ownership of a black Labrador Retriever puppy named "Finn."

Having always had a keen sense of and a passion for interior design, along with lots of vision and creativity (which added to her love of houses), Mary Foy decided to focus her energy in just that direction. "I took a leap of faith and started my own company, Ragsdale Renovations, LLC," she says. "I purchase homes in need of renovation and bring them back to life, making them even better than they were originally."

Her new career has turned out to be both exciting and quite challenging, not to mention loads of fun for Mary Foy! "I've learned so much through every stage of the process," she adds. "It's important to have the ability to envision a project and see through the "fixer-upper" state to the possibilities of what the final product *could* be. It's also important to work with a great contractor and skilled workers in all trade areas, have good planning, and patience, all of which makes great outcomes attainable."

Mary Foy bought her first property in December 2018. "I began renovation in February 2019, finishing it later that May. This house needed so much work and was completely redone from top to bottom – ceilings, floors, some walls, all new windows and doors, plumbing, electric, heating and air, gutting and enlarging the bathroom, gutting the kitchen, removal of its chimney, creating a laundry room and adding all new fixtures and appliances throughout."

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The property sold in November 2019. Mary Foy says, "And, I've already acquired another property and will start that renovation at the beginning of 2020!"

Advice for Today's Girls

Mary Foy believes that all girls who attend Saint Mary's are given the opportunity to reap untold benefits – a top-notch education, lifelong friendships, the opportunity to develop great relationships with faculty and staff on campus, unbelievable access to teachers, independence, learning how to manage day-to-day responsibilities, the attainment of self-discipline, being an important part of and a participant in a whole community, a strengthened self-esteem, a self-confidence like no other and the chance to grow in one's faith.

"Just to name a few," she says and laughs. "I experienced all of this and more, and I watched my classmates do the same."

It's Mary Foy's hope that all current Saint Mary's students will take full advantage of the opportunities provided to them while at this wonderful place. "I look forward to seeing young alumnae continue to evolve into the best they can be over the years to come."

She also says, "One's life is made up of many different seasons, whether you stick with doing one thing/having one career or trying your hand at more. And, it's never too late to change careers, by the way."

She also strongly believes anyone can do and be anything they desire through hard work, self-confidence, determination, perseverance, and of course, God's help.

"Saint Mary's helps make these things stronger, thus equipping its graduates to meet the real world successfully," she adds.

When not renovating houses, she's with her family and enjoys spending time at Pawleys Island (South Carolina Low Country), having fun with friends, and knocking things off her bucket list. "Some things on the horizon are building a house, going to the Kentucky Derby—*wearing a great hat or fascinator!* – skydiving, and *maybe* learning to ice skate," she says. "Ultimately, I'd like to ice skate in Rockefeller Center at *Christmastime* and hopefully in the snow!"

One item she just checked off her list happened in April. She's a vintage car enthusiast and was able to purchase a 1965 bright orange Ford Mustang convertible with a white top. "Give me a honk and a wave, if you see me cruising around, and I'll know you're a Saint Mary's girl too!"

Saint Mary's alumnae like Mary Foy Ragsdale '77HS '79C graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising their families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change in their communities. Mary Foy's story demonstrates the ability Saint Mary's women have to do big things no matter what age or stage in their life, and we're glad to share her story.

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