

West Aurora Schools

Hope D. Wall

(Pioneer in Special Education)



Hope D. Wall



**Hope D. Wall School
449 West Indian Trail Court, Aurora
Constructed 1969**

Profile of Hope D. Wall

Hope D. Wall (1912-2001) was a local pioneer in special education. She was born in 1912 in Kimball, South Dakota, the daughter of Harry and Alice Dykeman. She grew up on the prairies of Kimball and attended schools in that area. She received a teacher's certificate from Black Hills Teachers College in Spearfish, South Dakota.

Her first teaching assignments were the rural schools of Wyoming. She then moved with her family to Illinois and eventually settled in Aurora.

She met Byron Wall in Stoneville, South Dakota. He followed her to Illinois where they married in 1934 at the Lake County Courthouse. They settled in Aurora. Mrs. Wall taught at Brady School on Aurora's east side. She also worked as the assistant director at the Red Cross for a time.

In 1961, parents asked her to help start a school for the mentally retarded. Prior to this time, most children with disabilities did not attend school. Although she had no formal training in working with children with disabilities, she accepted the challenge.

At its inception, Wall was the only teacher at the private, eight-student John F. Kennedy School for the Mentally Retarded. In 1969, East and West Aurora School Districts agreed to work together to transform the private school into a public school and build a new facility on Indian Trail. The school was named for Hope Wall.

In 1972, the couple retired and moved to Sun City, Arizona. In 1994, their only daughter Linda passed away. The following year, Mr. Wall died of cancer. Hope Wall returned to Aurora in 1998 to be near her grandchildren.

According to her obituary, Hope was an independent soul who was known as a wonderful listener and confidant who could never be shocked, no matter how delicate the situation. She also had an unbelievable memory that created timeless stories.

Hope Wall cherished her solitude. Instead of taking a cruise for vacation, she chose a cargo ship or freighter. Yet, her home was always open to those passing through town. Her legacy can be found in her love for others, especially her love for children. Mrs. Wall died in 2001 and is buried in Arizona.

Sources for this profile: West Aurora Schools and the Aurora Beacon-News. A November 18, 1969 article in the Aurora Beacon-News reported that the new school under construction on the Mercy Center Campus would be named for Hope D. Wall. This profile, completed in 2016, is courtesy of the A+ Foundation for West Aurora Schools and the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley.



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