

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

MAZIE STRICKLAND FROELICH '51C SOCIETY OUTSTANDING ALUMNA 2020

BY MARGARET MCGLOHON '81C



*Gray Clark
Stoughton
'78HS '80C*

When we reached out to Saint Mary's alumna Gray Clark Stoughton '78HS '80C to let her know of her selection as the recipient of the Mazie Strickland Froelich '51C Society Outstanding Alumna 2020 award and that we wanted to honor her at reunion, her first comment was, "Oh, Margaret, I don't deserve this." Humbled and a bit embarrassed, it took a couple of minutes for me to remind Gray all she has done for our alma mater over the years, and how much she means to Saint Mary's and our community.

Gray grew up in Tarboro, N.C., a legacy Saint Mary's girl. Her mother, Gray Proctor Clark '52HS '54C, and many aunts and cousins attended Saint Mary's, as does her daughter, Eliza Stoughton '12HS, who is a current student. Eliza began her own Saint Mary's journey in the fall of 2009. That's when Gray reconnected with her alma mater.

Gray transferred to Saint Mary's for her junior

year of high school. The reason? "Well, mama asked me if I wanted to go, and I said yes," she says and laughs.

Gray had visited her cousin, Frances Shultz '76HS '78C, at Saint Mary's a few times and felt very much at home on the historic campus. She had been attending a fairly new, small independent school in Tarboro at the time and said she knew that if Saint Mary's was good enough for her mom and her cousin, then it would be good enough for her!

Gray and Kathy Sawyer Mann '78HS '80C were roommates all four years they were at Saint Mary's together. "I didn't know Kathy before Saint Mary's, but our parents knew each another. I think they may have requested we room together. Obviously, it was a great match!"

The girls lived together in Smedes Hall for two years, then moved to Cruikshank as college

Freshmen, and then back to 3rd West Smedes for their final year where both were active as hall counselors. As a student, Gray was a member of the French Honor Society, Beta Club, and was a Cold Cut. She also participated in sports.

"I played on the first high school soccer team," she recalls. "And, I played on the tennis and basketball teams, too."

Gray's summers were filled with days at Nags Head as a staff member for former Dean and Tennis Coach, Mary Lou Jones, for Ms. Jones's Tennis Camp. She also had adventures with her own family in the summertime.

"My parents loved to travel," she says. "My brother, Bill Clark, and I visited Africa, France, and England, among other locales. We also enjoyed spending time with our grandmother in the mountains of North Carolina."

Gray herself participated as a student in a five-week international trip with Dr. Marjolijn Werman, Saint Mary's French teacher. "It was an amazing adventure! We spent time in England, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Rome, and France."

Gray and her cousin, Duvall Schultz Fuqua '79HS, also traveled together for a three-month National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) trip to Kenya.

After graduating from Saint Mary's, Gray enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and majored in French with a minor in Art History, both areas of study she loved. After her years at UNC-CH, Gray worked for the sergeant-at-arms at the North Carolina General Assembly. Later, she worked for ten years at Simple Pleasures Design Group.

In 1987 she married Tommy Stoughton of Greenville. "That's where we settled and started our family," she explains. "We raised our two children, Thomas and Eliza."

Of Gray's many passions outside of work, volunteering is at the top of her list. "I am so appreciative to all who gave me opportunities to become engaged and helped me stretch my skill set."

When Thomas and Eliza were young, they attended The Oakwood School in Greenville. There, Gray was instrumental in implementing all the landscaping on the new campus. When not volunteering as a school mom, Gray was served on the board of several organizations, including: The North Carolina Symphony, SECU Family House in Chapel Hill, and Habitat for Humanity.

Once Eliza enrolled at Saint Mary's, Gray became involved in the Parents Association and could be found

on campus every time we had a major event. She and the "Tarboro Gang" as we lovingly call the group – Gray, her mom, aunts, and cousins – would show up at Saint Mary's and transform our campus for events like Parents Weekend, The Auction, and the end of the year Senior Dinner.

Since 2008, Gray's steadfast support of Saint Mary's has been noticed. She served as a member of the Board of Trustees from 2010 to 2016, was a member of our Giving Circles (an annual fund leadership group), and now is working hard as a volunteer on the Saint Mary's Forever Campaign Committee. In addition, she's hosted alumnae and admission events in her home, served on the host committee for regional events in Greenville, N.C. and other host committees, as well as hosted events in the Stoughton family home for beach events in Nags Head.

Even though they graduated 32 years apart, Gray and Eliza both believe they received the greatest gifts Saint Mary's has to offer: an environment that supports academic growth and fosters tolerance, empathy and courage in young women, teaching them life lessons that lead to a purposeful life, and, of course, the greatest gift of all...the opportunity to make special, lifelong friendships they both cherish. Gray also mentions that at Saint Mary's, the staff and other parents were very welcoming and appreciated her help.

"I'm just so thankful to have been given the opportunity to give back," she says. "It's a community like no other – a very special place. It's home!"

The Mazie Strickland Froelich '51C Society was established by the Alumnae Council to honor Mazie, Saint Mary's first female board chair and consummate volunteer. The Outstanding Alumna Award is given for outstanding service to the school through leadership, student recruitment and alumnae support.

Now, you understand why Gray Clark Stoughton '78HS '80C is this year's Outstanding Alumna award winner.

We are proud to call you an alumna, Gray. Thank you for your service to our alma mater over the years. We know you'll never be far away, and we hope you keep saying yes!

To learn more about The Mazie Strickland Froelich '51C Society Outstanding Alumnae Award, contact Margaret McGlohon '81C, Director of Alumnae Relations, at memcglohon@sms.edu or by phone at 919.424.4171, or visit us online at www.sms.edu/alumnae.