

The Life of Dotti Martin

In early 2010, a group of volunteers collaborated to create a special way to remember their dear and very special friend and colleague, Dotti Martin. The Dotti Martin Educational Scholarship/Destination Fund was established and approved by the Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania's Board of Directors in March 2010 to recognize the dedication of Dotti Martin; a former girl member, lifetime adult member, adult volunteer, and staff member who passed away in January 2010. As part of the criteria for the fund, applicants must read about Dotti's life and become familiar with her ideals.

Dorothy "Dotti" Martin was born on January 16, 1943 in Philadelphia. The oldest of the three daughters of Margaret (Murphy) and Al Martin, she lived her early years in Germantown until, at the age of 15, her family moved to Lansdale. Dotti held great admiration for her father who was a hemophiliac. Despite his limiting condition, he taught Dotti that there was nothing she couldn't do. In 1960, Dotti graduated from North Penn High School. Over the years, Dotti attended numerous courses at Montgomery County Community College.

Although information about Dotti's scouting career as a girl is limited, a photo of her troop visiting the United Nations is available. Also existing is a letter written by the captain of the troop in which she was a member when she lived in Philadelphia.

While still in high school, Dotti became a leader of a Junior Girl Scout troop; although at that time the age level was termed Intermediates. She was listed as an assistant for the first several years because she wasn't old enough to be a leader. Later, for many years, Dotti advised Senior Troop #553 in the Hatfield Neighborhood. When Dotti moved to Indian Valley Service Unit, she brought the troop number 553 with her and led the Senior troop with Flos Horsfield for several years. The first Gold Award recipient within Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia, Ginger Barth, was a member of this troop. Leadership for the troop was passed on shortly after Ginger completed her Gold Award.

In her younger years Dotti thought she might like to be a nurse; although over time that goal was replaced by her other desire to become a wildlife photographer. After graduating from high school, Dotti moved to Chicago where she worked in the Quality Control Department for a company that produced checks for celebrities. Upon returning to Philadelphia, she worked as a school bus driver and in the quality control department for a Hershey lamp factory and Sweetzel's pretzel factory. She was trained as an FTD florist and worked for a Lansdale florist before joining the staff of Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia around 1980. At that time, the council headquarters were in Philadelphia. In 1996, Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia and Girl Scouts of Delaware City consolidated into Girl Scouts of Southeastern Pennsylvania (GSSP). Shortly after, the Girl Scout headquarters relocated to Shelly Ridge in Miquon and Dotti's staff position was based there.

Dotti started her professional career with Girl Scouts in 1976 as a field aide serving troops in the Lansdale-Telford Area and also worked at summer camp. In 1977, Dotti became a full-time staff member. Over the years, Dotti served in a number of staff positions including: Product Sales Manager, Expediter, Equipment Clerk, Receptionist, Administrative Assistant to the CEO in 1991, and Volunteer Services Coordinator in 2001, from which she retired in 2007.

A year or so before Daisy Girl Scouts were introduced by Girls Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA), Judy Borie, Executive Director of GSSP, asked Dotti and Flos to conduct a

field test of the new program. They met with ten “Pixies” at the Harleysville scout cabin, using the program provided by GSUSA. When Daisy Girl Scouts were officially introduced by GSUSA, Dotti and Flos led the first Daisy troop in Philadelphia, and in 2008 they “mentored” a Daisy troop in Harleysville. Two women were willing to be troop leaders, but since it was late in the year and training was not yet available, Dotti and Flos met with the women, helped them plan a program, and attended every meeting; even though these young women were leading the troop. The girls enjoyed a wonderful program and the following year these two ladies attended training and officially became leaders.

Dotti spent her life helping others. She completed training to become a member of the Lansdale Ambulance Corp, where she volunteered for several years. It was not unusual for Dotti to spend vacation time doing service projects for her church or community. In particular, she traveled with a group from Trinity Lutheran Church of Lansdale to the Appalachian area to repair homes.

In Dotti’s words, “I get so much out of [Girl Scouting]. I’ve done things I normally wouldn’t have done, like whitewater rafting, traveling, and meeting a lot of nice people.” The thing she liked the most about Girl Scouting was their mission to help girls and women to develop their full potential.

Her varied interests included camping, swimming, traveling, flower arranging, making crafts, photography, volunteering in the church office, helping wherever she was needed, and making new friends. She enjoyed taking long walks on a winter beach. However, Dotti’s favorite activity was finding a good bargain. She thrived on taking a seemingly worthless inexpensive item and thinking outside the box to put it to use in a worthwhile project.

Dotti enjoyed bowling and field hockey. While in high school she was the goalie for the field hockey team. An avid sports fan, the Philadelphia Eagles was her number one fascination; although she enjoyed any football game. She also liked to watch baseball, especially going to a Phillies games. While Dotti enjoyed going to ice hockey or basketball games, she never enjoyed watching those games on TV.

A movie fan, Dotti had a full collection of James Bond movies. She was also a fan of Bette Davis with *Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte* and *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* among her favorites. Other favorites were the *Godfather* series, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Pollyanna*.

Dotti was a collector and kept nearly every book she read. Some of her favorite authors included John Grisham, Robin Cook, and Danielle Steele. She also collected various types of Girl Scout books, commemorative tins, and U.S. stamps.

Dotti loved all living things. During the summer, Dotti was often found outside tending the flower gardens she created around her home. For many years, she lived in the home of her dear friend Flos and Flos’ family. Dotti enjoyed working with her hands doing gardening and small household repairs.

She always had at least one pet. Dotti talked about her childhood pet Chihuahua who apparently spent a lot of time in Dotti’s coat pocket and a pet duck that she washed with dish detergent. In later life, she always had a cat.

Those who knew Dotti remember that she always carried a pocket knife (Dotti *never* carried a purse), and she was always willing to use it when needed. The only beverage that she drank was diet ginger ale. She loved pepperoni pizza and usually selected it for her birthday dinner.

Her favorite color was blue and she was quite upset one year when Flos did not take the hint that she wanted blue Donald Duck pajamas for Christmas.

Camp was a special place for Dotti, especially Camp Laughing Waters. She loved serving as a site director because it involved interacting with many troops. Her time as a camp cook was challenging because of the heat, yet Dotti thrived on adding ingredients provided from surplus food to make dishes tastier for kids. It meant a lot to her when campers asked for repeats of her special concoctions.

Perhaps Dotti's favorite memory of camp cooking was preparing a turkey in the hole - complete with all the trimming. She also remembered that the campers would dress, IN SKIRTS for dinner. On one camping trip with her troop, she noticed that the girls forgot to pack the pots and pans. Dotti didn't alert the girls to the oversight because she thought it would be a good learning experience for them. The girls finally found a pot in the trunk of Dotti's car (a black hole which always seemed to contain anything you might need). Years later, Dotti still smiled while remembering the many changes girls made to the menu to make one pot meals, cook on sticks, or use plank cooking.

Although Dotti loved all types of camping, if given the chance, she preferred pitching tents with older girls. Girls who received primitive camping skills training from Dotti also got the job of pitching Dotti's tent.

While at camp, Dotti enjoyed campfires – and sleeping! The girls and adults of Troop 553 in the Indian Valley Service Unit probably remember one particular camping trip at Eagles Mere. Once the sun rose and the girls and adults prepared, ate, and cleaned up breakfast, the girls made the usual check of the camp site. After the girls' and troop gear was packed, the only chore that needed to be done was to clean up Dotti's tent and pack her gear. No matter how many ways the girls tried to wake her, Dotti continued to sleep. Finally, Flos gave the okay and the girls literally took Dotti's tent and stowed it while Dotti slept. When the sun finally woke her, Dotti found herself surrounded by her clothes, sleeping bag and pack in an open field.

Camp songs also held a special place with Dotti. Her favorite was *Grey Squirrel* and she often performed it to the delight of campers when she "swished her bushy tail." *Ash Grove* was Dotti's favorite Girl Scout song.

Dotti's volunteer positions included:

1960-63	Troop Leader, Intermediate Girl Scouts
1968-74	Troop Leader, Junior Girl Scouts
1970-74	Assistant Advisor, Senior Girl Scouts
1973	National Delegate
1974-82	Advisor, Senior Girl Scouts
1974	District 28 Day Camp Committee
1978	Neighborhood Youth Corps – Camp Indian Valley
1978	Troop Leader, Pixies
1979	Troop Leader, Junior Girl Scouts
1981	National Delegate
1984-87	Advisor, Senior Girl Scouts
1987	Council Trainer
1993	Charter member of the Juliette Low Society
1998	Troop Leader
1998	Site Director

1998	Service Unit Be a Reader Manager
1999-2001	Service Team Member
2007	Mentor for Daisy Troop Leader
2008	Service Unit Cookie Cupboard Manager
2009	Delegate

Dotti also served on the Lou Henry Hoover committee, 17 years as a site director, 8 years as a Service Unit *Be A Reader* Manager, 5 years as a trainer, 5 years as a delegate, 3 years as a site director coordinator, 3 years on the Wider Opportunity Committee, 2 years on *Together We Stand*, a year as a service unit publicity chair, and a year as a Junior troop cookie manager. Dottie served on camporee committees in the Indian Valley Service Unit and Hatfield Service Unit, the Junior Jubilee committee, the Recognitions and Awards committee, and Exploring Nature Indoors.

Through the years, Dotti received many council and national awards. These include:

1975	William Penn Award (Philadelphia Girl Scout Council)
1979	Legion of Honor
1981	Thanks Badge
1998	Thanks Badge II
2002	50 Year Membership Numeral Guard
2007	Ellen Mary Cassatt Award (the highest GSSP award at the time)
2007	55 Year Membership Numeral Guard
Unknown	Appreciation Pin

She was also recognized by her service unit with the Daisy Award (date unknown) and the District 28 Award (date unknown).

In addition to being a council trainer for a number of years, some of the training Dotti completed included: Orientation I in 1960, all age levels in 1960, Tent Camping in 1962, Advanced Camp in 1963, Troop Camp in 1971, Back Packing in 1982, Project Learning Tree in 1999, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) in 2003, Girls 11-17 Age Level in 2005, Zinc the Zebra in 2005, Troop Camp Update in 2006, and First Aid & CPR (most recent re-cert) in 2007.

Dotti loved Girl Scouting and celebrated everyone's successes. Senior Troop 553 from Hatfield, circa 1976, held a special fondness in her memory. They were referred to by everyone in the district as "Dotti's girls" - a troop to be reckoned with. One favorite memory was a Senior Troop 553 spelunking trip. During this trip Dotti realized she was claustrophobic. Another favorite memory with this troop was a whitewater rafting trip during which time she was stranded in the middle of the river. Dotti couldn't swim so she waited and watched 20 other rafters go by before she (the last to be rescued) finally got off the rock.

Many of the girls who served as Bicentennial Tour guides were members of this troop. Long after the girls graduated, they maintained relationships with each other and Dotti. When she became ill, these young women helped with Dotti's care and created a special way to memorialize her during a tree planting ceremony at Camp Laughing Waters on October 31, 2010.

Although Dotti never let it alter her life style, her body was attacked by myriad diseases and operations throughout her life. Her body developed very exotic diseases that often took doctors months of special testing before diagnosing the problem. After a Girl Scout camping trip to Savannah, Georgia, Dotti came very close to losing her life until a research doctor in Alabama

correctly diagnosed her with an unusual strain of the little known disease Histoplasmosis. This disease grows as a fungus which was transferred by a mosquito during that camping trip.

In the spring of 2009, Dotti suffered a broken collarbone. An avid traveler, she had always dreamed of seeing the glorious expanses of Alaska, and was not about to let a broken bone affect the cruise she had planned for June of 2009. This last adventure was one of her favorites; she thoroughly enjoyed spending two weeks with friends exploring and enjoying Alaska by land and sea. One of Dotti's favorite memories was watching dozens of American Eagles soaring over a pond with a majestic mountain as a back drop.

When Dotti returned from this Alaskan vacation, her doctors finally admitted that the injury to the bone wasn't healing as expected and ordered additional tests. She was diagnosed with bone cancer. Not one to give up, Dotti spent the next several months enduring treatments without success.

Her final days were spent at home with loved ones surrounding her. The many friendships she had formed through the years provided a constant supply of visits and well wishes. Former members of Girl Scout Troop #553 from 1975 developed a schedule to make sure that Dotti was never without company or her favorite chicken noodle soup and other treats. Dotti particularly enjoyed a visit from a group of Girl Scout leaders who came "a-caroling" and a visit from two board members along with Barbara Hill, interim Chief Executive Officer of Girl Scouts of Eastern PA. After learning that Dotti was an amazing resource for problem solving, they visited her to tap into that resource. In typical Dotti style, she identified many issues within the new council and gave her suggestions to build an organization that would provide the very best opportunities for girls and support for the volunteers who work directly with them.

On January 20, 2010, Dotti passed away at home.