



Millie Gohres, who lived a rags-to-riches story, dies

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Millie Gohres saw life from many sides. Born to a large family of a poor Southern railroad worker, she became a hard-working adult of modest means. With her third husband, fellow grocery clerk Bill, they amassed a fortune through smart California real estate investments.

While Millie was living her Horatio Alger rags-to-reaches dream, her family said, she never forgot her humble roots.

"Millie was a down-to-earth woman of substance," said her husband, William L. Gohres, who with Millie built the \$6.5 million "Villa de Reve" two-story brick castle home off Jones Boulevard near West Desert Inn Road.

"She said no to my idea of building a moat around the place, and we didn't have servants. When she said it was time to clean the toilets, we were multimillionaires who scrubbed our own toilets."

Mildred Louise "Millie" Gohres, who with her husband shunned critics who said you couldn't build profitable single-family homes in North Las Vegas and went on to construct the 320-acre, 2,000-home Rancho Del Norte subdivision that inspired others to build in that area, died Tuesday. She was 72.

Services for the Las Vegas resident of 16 years will be 3 p.m. Saturday at Palm Mortuary-Jones. Visitation will be 3-6 p.m. Friday and an hour before services at that location.

She was co-founder of the Gohres-Hohmann Foundation, which assists local charities. Hohmann was her maiden name.

"Millie always let me be the front-runner," Bill Gohres said. "But she kept the books and was the backbone of our business. We did everything together. When it came to all of the big decisions, we made them together."

None was bigger than when they decided to move from California to Southern Nevada in 1986 and ignore all of the bad talk about how economically depressed North Las Vegas was. They risked it all and in the process became modern-day pioneers, opening what became a new local frontier.

The Gohres bought the land, then approached then-North Las Vegas Mayor Jim Seastrand with their idea. The land was annexed into the North Las Vegas city limits and Rancho Del Norte was built.

While Bill oversaw the construction of the development, Millie was in charge of putting the finishing interior touches on their 8,500-square-foot home that is adorned with glistening copper towers.

The Renaissance European structure is filled with antiques collected during the couple's world travels. Artists painted intricate, detailed murals on the walls and ceilings. The five bedrooms and eight bathrooms are decorated in many themes, including a Parisian room and a Las Vegas room.

Bill says you can see Millie's hand in everything from the porcelain doorknobs to the 13 opulent crystal chandeliers to the 22-karat gold-plated bathroom fixtures.

The house aside, Bill and Millie Gohres were most proud of the fact that in 29 years of their marriage, nothing was ever handed to them. They worked hard and earned everything they got.

Born July 14, 1930, in DeQueen, Ark., eight miles north of Texarkana, Millie was the fourth child of seven of Henry William Hohmann and the former Martha Jane Manning.

"We were a poor family and growing up we worked hard," said her brother Robert Hohmann of Houston. "We had this big garden that Millie worked in, growing vegetables so that we would have enough to eat."

After graduating from DeQueen High, Millie had several jobs, including picking strawberries and working as a clerk in the DeQueen drugstore. In 1966, she moved to Anaheim, Calif., where she initially worked as a bank teller, but soon took a job as cashier at an Alpha Beta grocery store.

Her supervisor was Bill Gohres, who worked with her for three years before asking her out on a date.

"What initially attracted me to Millie was that she was the hardest worker in the place," he said. "She rang up the highest volumes of any cashier there and her till balanced to the penny. Of course I found her attractive too."

They married on Sept. 17, 1972.

In 1991, Millie Gohres suffered the first of several strokes. Doctors discovered she had an artery disease. Bill said his wife remained so strong-willed to the end that despite being in great pain, she insisted on climbing the 18 steps of the marble spiral staircase to their bedroom.

She died in Bill's arms at Villa de Reve, which means "Our Dream Home."

The house, which several years ago was donated to the family charity to avoid, as Bill put it, "sending our money back to Washington, D.C.," has been used to host parties to raise funds for charities, such as the Clark County Public Education Foundation and the Boy Scouts.

The Gohres have not sought to have local streets or buildings named for them. All they want is for their donations to help responsible charities. To that end, they agreed when they started their foundation to give money only to nonprofit groups that return at least 65 cents of each dollar raised to the causes.

In addition to her husband and brother, Gohres is survived by her son, Ronald Hungate of Las Vegas; her daughter-in-law, Entoinette Hungate of Las Vegas; two sisters, Esther Presson of Eagletown, Okla., and Linda Hughes of Horatio, Ark.; another brother, Charles Hohmann of Alma, Ark.; and one grandson, Christopher Hungate of Las Vegas. She was preceded in death by two sisters, Georgia Maxine Flournoy in 1986, and Edith Treadaway on June 29.

The family suggests donations in Millie Gohres memory to Gohres-Hohmann Foundation, 6150 W. Palmyra Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89146.