

LILLIAN MAY KLINE  
David Kline

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Some people make a tremendous impression on young kids. There are teachers who to this day are still referred to as "Miss Helen," a person of influence we sometimes read is known as "Miss Manners," and some of our old girlfriends we know as "Miss Steak."

One of the people who influenced my early years was a World War I nurse who has been dead for the past 60 years. Her name was **Lillian May Kline**, both a World War I nurse and a personal nurse to the Rockefeller family, an old lady when I had my last memory of her frail frame, her smiling face and snow-white hair. She lived at the time of her death on Mill Street [in Millville, PA], a victim, I remember Father saying, "of consumption," a term once applied to a person who seemed to be "wasting away to nothing," often bothered with a nagging cough and fever. Tuberculosis was called "consumption," and this was the illness that probably caused the end of Lillian.

Lillian was a daughter of John S. and Mary Elizabeth Appleman Kline, lived at Maple Grove on what later became known as the "Harry Troy farm" until she entered nurse's training in New York City, a monumental move out of this area for a young girl. She became a reserve nurse from February 1, 1918, to August, 1919, in the U.S. Naval Hospital at Cape May, New Jersey.

Lillian served as a "nurse nanny" to perhaps the richest American family in history—the Rockefeller family—for fourteen years. She was especially fond of the young Winthrop Rockefeller (May 1, 1912-February 22, 1973), the fourth son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Winthrop later served as the first Republican governor of Arkansas since Reconstruction.

Winthrop was known as "Win" to family and friends. Lillian called him "Winnie," although few locally ever knew if she did that to his face.

After serving the Rockefeller family, Lillian worked for the *Welfare Island Hospital* in New York until she retired in 1936.

Doyle, Nell and Bruce Sutliff rented Lillian's house for a number of years, a convenient location for Doyle to walk across the street to the Sutliff garage to go to work. Lillian eventually moved to Mill Street, Benton, although she "wintered over" in Virginia for many years with a nurse friend, Ruth Pendleton and husband, Warren.

Ten or so years ago Bob and Nina Baker and I were in Florida and we visited what was then a cultural and community center in Ormond Beach, but was at one time known as "The Casements," named, I suppose, for the many casement windows in the building. John D. Rockefeller bought the house for his winter residence in 1918. In this house is where Will

Rogers allegedly once remarked after a game of golf with Rockefeller, "I'm glad you won today, Mr. Rockefeller. The last time you lost the price of gasoline went up!" Rockefeller died in his sleep in 1937 and two years later the Rockefeller family sold The Casements. When Bob, Nina and I visited the property, I saw a picture at the bottom of the stairway leading to the second floor of Lillian Kline tending to Mr. Rockefeller. Her face is as vivid to me today thanks to that photograph as it was as a kid when I would stop at her house to have a piece of strawberry pie served on a lace doily. I suspect that the photograph still hangs on the wall.

For additional information about the growing-up years of Winthrop Rockefeller during Lillian Kline's service to the family, see John L. Ward's two biographies: *The Arkansas Rockefeller* (Louisiana State University Press, 1978) and *Winthrop Rockefeller, Philanthropist: A Life of Change* (University of Arkansas Press, 2004).