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Special Edition



Edith Riel
1925 - 2019



Edith Merica Riel

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Edith Sophie "Lilica" Merica Riel, 94, joined the love of her life, Frank James Riel, in heaven on October 5, 2019 at 8:45pm. Lilica Merica was born in Athens, Greece as the sixth and youngest child of Theodore Merica, 1883-1963 and Evriklia Amaxopoulo, 1888-1966. She was preceded in death by her four brothers, Romulas 1908-1977, Nickolas 1910-1934, Michael 1912-2001, and Byron 1920-1988 and her only sister Xanthippi (Marie Hélène) 1917-1963.

Edith Riel lived a full, courageous, and joyful life. Because her nearest brother was 5 years older, she spent much of her childhood playing alone. She enjoyed visiting an orphanage to play with children her own age which convinced her she would, someday, enjoy having a large family of her own.

Lilica lived her early life in a multicultural and multilingual context in Iran learning Greek (home language), French (educated language) and some English, Russian, and Farsi. It was love at first sight when, at 17, Edith she met Frank Riel, 23, an army officer stationed with the Persian Gulf Command during WWII, at a party. They played tennis, went to movies and he visited at her home in Teheran and her brother's home in Tabriz, but they were always chaperoned. They were very much in love and wanted to get married but needed her Father's consent which was not granted due to Issues of age, cultural differences and a necessary move to America. Sadly, Frank has to return to the US after his tour of duty and was separated from Edith.

However, after two years of persistence, a lot of letter writing, and a father's love in recognizing Edith's broken heart, Theodore finally agreed to send her to the United States to attend college and make sure she would be happy in America.

Edith, who at that time was 21, traveled alone, halfway across the world (taking a few months to get to America) just to follow her heart. After being enrolled for only three months at the University of Dubuque, Iowa, and after convincing her father that she was truly happy, Theodore granted permission for them to get married.

On December 28, 1946, she became Mrs. Frank James Riel, Jr. The wedding was a large formal party with Edith looking exotic and stunning in her wedding dress. The only disappointment was that no member of her family could attend due to the distance and time it took to travel back then. But she did have her best friend from school, Lucy Savino, there to celebrate with her.

Richard was born nine months and one day after her wedding and Edward appeared a year later, with Margaret, Francie, Carol, Robert and the twins, Elizabeth and Roberta completing the family of eight in a span of only eleven years.

Raising eight kids might seem like exercise enough, but Edith loved to walk. She took her children on long walks down the steep hills of Mission Hills to meet Frank after work and then climbed back up those hills to return home. She would also use the promise of ice cream cones at Thrifty (In Loma Square) to bribe the older kids to join the stroller parade.

While her kids were young, she worked hard all week with laundry, shopping, cleaning, and driving them around. But Sundays were for church and family. Edith was a devote Catholic and her family would fill an entire pew at church. Sunday lunch was also a big meal after which, the family would most likely enjoy an outing to either the San Diego Zoo, Presidio Park, or, when the weather was good, to La Jolla Shores. On really hot days, after a beach outing we would skip dinner and go right to dessert, banana split sundaes with all the topping. On those days, the lesson taught was everyone was still a kid.

Edith and Frank played tennis every Saturday. Then in the late sixties, Edith learned how to play golf joining Frank every weekend at the Stardust Country Club in Fashion Valley. On Tuesdays she played golf with the women then later in the afternoon they'd all meet to play bridge. She continued to play golf weekly, even after Frank's passing, until a few weeks before her death. She was the oldest regular golfer at Admiral Baker Golf course, playing every Monday.

Bridge and bridge parties were the social glue that connected her to a wide net of friends. It was quite a production to prepare the bridge parties and having five daughters was an advantage in this enterprise.

When all of her children were in school, she volunteered at Mercy Hospital as a Candy Striper. And she studied to become an American citizen. She was very proud of her adopted country and loved to sit and watch the flag. She would say that the only flag more attractive than a Greek flag was the American Flag. Her favorite colors were red, white, and blue.

Edith lived life fully and with energetic joy. Even after losing Frank and with the problems of living with memory lapses, she remained happy in the moments that she had, and treasured the memories that were strong. All of her children stayed in San Diego and she saw most of them weekly, and all of them, and their families, at the many Riel Family celebrations. She enjoyed the company of friends she made at the two retirement communities she lived at, Merrill Gardens and more recently at The Montera.

She is survived by seven of her eight children losing Francie to cancer a year ago, her twenty-two grandchildren who know her as Yaya (Greek for Grandmother), and she was looking forward to meeting her 26th and 27th great grandchildren both to be born this December. She loved and is loved by many. That is her legacy.



Letters From The Past

By Listy Gillingham

Reprinted from the April 2012 Edition of the RFNL



We have all heard the story about Mom's (Edith's) travel to America and her marriage to Dad (Frank Jr.). As I became a parent, I often wondered how in the world would Mom's parents agree to let her leave Iran to marry Dad and let him sweep her away into a country they knew very little about. Going through some old letters and papers (Bob thought I needed to be productive while immobile), it was clear that Mom was determined and played her hand very well in convincing her Dad to let her go. There were a few surprises (not huge) but worthy of mentioning from reading these documents. So here's what I gathered from a few old letters saved by Dad.

First I share a bit of context provided by Mom. Frank was stationed in the Middle East during WWII. He met Edith at an Embassy party; later he went to see Edith in Tabriz and asked her to marry him. He gave her the only ring he had, his Citadel College ring. Mom suggested he wait to ask her father until she could smooth the way. She asked her mother who asked her father. Unfortunately, he said no, she was too young at just barely 18 and told her to give back the ring. Mom said that the ring didn't matter as they had pledged their hearts- it was just a matter of time.

Frank returned to the US after his tour of duty. Letters went back and forth. Most of them were from Mom's Dad, Theodore, but written by his son, Bryon, who had a better command of English. On January 25, 1946 Mom wrote a letter to Dad talking about her disappointment in not being able to get an earlier passage to America (almost a year delay) because the American Consul could not make the arrangements quicker. Mom's Dad, Theodore, wanted Mom to attend school in England where her brother, Michael, lived. But in her letter she says she flat out refused to go to England as her wish was to go to America and learn "the America way of living while

improving her English."

She continued planning by suggesting that Frank ask his father, Frank Sr. to write a letter to her Dad, Theodore asking for Edith to be their daughter-in-law. Mom stated this was the traditional way and her father was very much a traditionalist.. She then asked Frank to let her know if his parents were willing to do this by sending a telegram with this coded message- "Merica Teheran for Edith approved." That signal would then give Edith more time to prepare her father for the letter that

was likely to come. She stated, "My Father will never consent to our marriage without your parent's approval." Mom even typed her letter and sent it twice to make sure Dad got it.

While I didn't find the letter Frank Sr. wrote, I did find the letter in response, written by her brother Romulus to Frank Sr. acknowledging the receipt of his letter on March 25th. He responded back on May 4, 1946 (can you imagine Mom being patient enough to wait for close to 5 months to get this approval?). Again, it contained a few extra facts I didn't know. Theodore mentioned meeting Frank and how he was "correct and polite" at all times. He also noted that he felt it was his "duty towards the soldiers, who were their allies, to allow him time to spend in their house." He stated he "ignored the interest Frank had shown for his daughter" and called it a "childish young people's affair and nothing more." He said, once Frank left, that was the end of it all.

He noted his intention was to send Edith to England to spend time with her brother and how Mom stated that she would prefer to go the U.S. and then brought up Frank again. At this point, he gets reflective...as parents do, and begins to talk about his ideas and hopes for his children. He states that he is a Greek Christian Orthodox and that though Protestants have his deepest esteem, he always wished that his sons and daughters married a Greek. He stated "he was of the opinion that when somebody marries, it's forever and understanding between people from the same country is easier." He then stated that he had no success with this wish as his two sons and eldest daughter had all married foreigners yet, he admitted, he liked them all (Go innocent bystanders!). He then noted, "even after a child passes their 20th year, it is tradition to have both parent's consent to the marriage. He states that the letter written in March demonstrates their consent and he would not hesi-

tate anymore. He then goes into the details of Mom's departure to the U.S. and signing her up to attend the University of Dubuque as she would need to learn the language of her future husband. He says that she will likely visit their family and "after some time (I should prefer to wait at least one year, and your son and your daughter continue to feel they can live together and be happy, they then could declare the marriage." He then noted that Edith should not be a financial challenge for her husband as she will have her own dowry (wow...I wanted one of those). Theodore then states that he is 62 years old and his wife is 56, and they both liked to travel. He noted that it may be possible to visit America if they were feeling up to it in the future (They never came). He closed the letter by saying, "I love very much Edith and my only preoccupation is to see her happy and your letter (from Frank Sr.) gave me the impression that if the marriage would be declared, she would be happy with Frank Jr." (Little did he know how happy they both would be).

On Oct. 29, 1946, there was one last letter from Theodore (written by Byron) to Frank Sr. stating again that he wanted the marriage to wait at least a year. He then stated that his eldest son, Romulus, had several letters from Edith asking her brother to get her Dad to give an earlier consent (for the Christmas holidays). Theodore was not thrilled with the idea, but understood that finding lodging for Edith away from Frank, while she was in school, wasn't easy. He admitted to not understanding the American way of life, but gave in by giving his consent to the earlier wedding. The 2nd page to the letter was gone, but it does explain his final acceptance and offers assistance in preparing the furnishings for their future home.

As a parent, with a daughter living in Spain, reading and summarizing the letters was helpful in learning a little bit about the grandparents I never met and my understanding of their ability to let go of their youngest child. It was obvious to me that they (all four parents) loved their children and wanted them both to marry and live happily ever after. Sixty-five years (plus a few months) after, it seems that all of their hopes and wishes (which we have for all of OUR children) continue to live on through Mom's and Dad's marriage commitment. A true love story that took persistence, hard work (8 kids), and everlasting love to endure the challenges that the many, many, years of married life provide.

There are a lot of ways I could describe Mom: Funny, Strong, Smart, Loving, Devoted, Giving, Beautiful... The list could go on for miles. But anyone who met her would already know these things. However, what I think I will always remember the most about her is that she knew how to live life to the fullest!



She was never just a passenger on the train of life she was her own conductor. She knew what she wanted and once her mind was made up there was no turning her back. She overcame obstacles one at a time and while it may have taken some time to get by them, she was very persistent and most always met her goals.

She enjoyed life, she knew the things she liked, and she did them well. She was enthusiastic about her life, many times expressing herself in terms of her family like when at Bingo and needing "B8" she would say "B8 I have eight children so give me a B8!"



She taught me a lot of things, but I think the most important one was to have passion for what you believe in and passion about the things you do. Passion allows us to live life, not just experience it. Mom had a lot of passion in her heart and she also passed that passion on to me. I love you mom and I know you will always be with me.



It's never easy to lose a mom, I don't care how old you are, you want them to be around forever. Our mom was no different. She taught us more lessons than we could ever thank her for. Having her gone leaves an empty spot in our hearts that won't be filled in the same way. Knowing she's with Dad, Francie, Bruce and God helps, but it's still a loss for us.



I want to thank my siblings for being there in many ways and helping me weather this last storm with mom. Sharing the memories and great family events continues to bind us together. I look forward to staying close through Sat. lunches in Mom and Dad's memories and sharing holidays celebrations in the style they would expect us to carry on with. You make my life fuller and you make it impossible to forget them. I think that's the blessing mom kept giving us every time she saw us.

Love you Mom forever!

Grandma Yaya,

I am so lucky to have called you my Yaya for so long. You set an amazing example for all of us about the importance of family, taking chances, and being yourself. While I can't say I always understood your thinking (let's call it generational differences), I admired the person you were and feel that I inherited some of my adventure-seeking ways from you. Your choices in life showed me that I too could venture into a world beyond the one in which I was raised. You also showed me what it means to love with all of your heart and to be completely dedicated to your family. I can only dream that I too will reach to see my 90th years and will build a family so wonderful as the one that you built with Grandpa. You leave an amazing legacy behind (I have the best mom, aunts, uncles and cousins in the world) and will forever be in my heart as I continue to grow and learn what life is all about. Love, Annie



My mom, Edith Riel, was such a fun-loving spirit in my life. I loved our weekend walking trips to get ice cream. Only my mom could make walking over 5 miles for a measly scoop of ice cream sound like fun. We would sing songs in French or talk about the news of the family.



I also have so many fond memories of our Saturday shopping trips with the three of us, Listy, my mom and me. It wasn't until my dad retired that he and my brother Ed joined the fun. The five of us would have lunch and then my dad and Ed would go off and work on a project, while the girls spent the afternoon shopping.

We were always on the hunt for the best deals. With a big family, there was always a special occasion to shop for and gifts to be bought. We would laugh about nothing and enjoyed the fun of being together.

As the years went by, my mom became less willing to shop with us. Ed became her morning walking person and after lunch she was ready to go back to Merrill Gardens for the activities that awaited her. But for us, all growing up, Listy and I got the attention that only the youngest get to enjoy. We were pals. We were the three amigos. We were the best company for each of us for different reasons. For my mom, we were her entertainment for the day. And for us, it was our way of racking up memories of our mom in her good days.



I feel so blessed to have a mom that lived to be 94 and a half years old. I know that we all hoped that she would make it to 100 but God had a different plan for mom. I like to think she is in heaven, hair perfect styled by Francie, dancing with Dad and Bruce. I like to think that she is surrounded by her siblings and parents getting everyone to walk with her and sing songs. I like to think that someday I will be in her arms again getting blessed on my forehead. Until then, I will miss her bright smile and loving heart forever.





My world just became very quiet, my heart a little emptier, and Heaven must be full of laughter and love!!

No more 8am wake up/today's schedule calls, 9:15pm end of day run down/goodnight calls, BINGO, Happy Hours, lunches, walking, TV remote tutoring (again and again!), movies, ice cream, wine, nails, hair, the wash, grocery, shoes, clothes shopping, doctor appointments, and Congo Bars all have come to an end. I never thought I would miss it all, especially my phone dinging at all hours of the day and night and the late-night phone calls of not being able to sleep or the noise outside...but I do, very much.

Moms are special and my mom was the life of the party! "Crazy Yaya", as one of my grandkids called her with affection, always made the time together full of laughter and love. She lived life as if she always only had "one more to go" before BINGO! She loved a glass of wine and a sweet treat here and there. She walked and played golf like no other 94-year-old. She refused to give into pain. She sang, she danced, she made the best of every day after she lost my dad, but always looked forward to being with him again. I can only hope she is now sipping wine, eating a congo bar and dancing with my dad while catching up on all the latest fashions and styles with Francie again.

Love ya Mom xoxoxo!
Jeff and Carol



Monday Margaret

Margaret: Hi Mom!

Mom: Oh Margaret – so nice to hear from you.

Margaret: Do you know what day it is today?

Mom: No (laughs)

Margaret: It is Monday

Mom: Oh, yes Monday Margaret!

Margaret: And what do we do on Mondays?

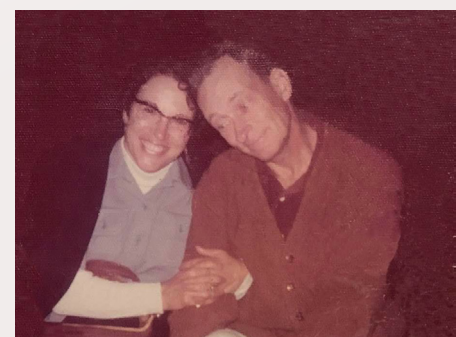
Here the guessing game would start and finally we would arrive (with increasing amounts of help over the past year), at playing golf. In the past, she would get very excited and want to know the time and would promise to ready. Recently, she would say that she didn't know if she could still play but she would try. We would pack up clubs, grab her hat and sunglasses, and head off the golf course. And then something close to magic would happen. The 90+ years would fade away and she would straighten up and stop looking like an old lady. She would take the clubs and head off to the first tee with confidence. I couldn't get her to ride in the golf cart on the first hole. She would just head out and follow the ball. She once told me that if she has a heart attack on the course, leave her be. She would be happy to die playing golf. She also said it would be miserable to live if she couldn't play golf. She continued to play golf until the last Monday I spent with her.

On September 23 I called to take her to play golf. She said she didn't think she could play –her back and ribs hurt. This was new, as generally she would just complain about being too old or too tired. I tested the golf course magic—I picked her up and drove out to the course and I suggested we start by practicing putting as she did look frail. She tried but then stopped and said her ribs hurt. I wondered if she had fallen and reinjured her ribs and then had forgotten that it happened. So, we left. I took her to get her hair done and then we sat, and I asked her questions about her youth. The following week Bud and I headed out to visit the Merica ancestral home—Constantinople (now Istanbul) and I hoped that pictures I would bring back might trigger some memories. We talked about her early years. Then we played



bingo. She kissed me goodbye and that was to be the last time I saw my Mother alive.

I visited the house where Mary, Mother of God died in Ephesus on the same morning that my own mother left this earth. The last day I spent with my mom I had repaired this old faded and faded photo of her with Dad. I took my last image of her as we talked about her childhood. I was hoping that my trip to Constantinople/Istanbul and Turkey would help me bring back pictures and information to help her recall her own past. Now I have to do it without her. I left a prayer at this site a few years back that my mother would live a full, long life and that it would end quickly with little pain. My prayer was answered. She died at 94 and was able to play golf almost to the end. But I hate that she is gone. It is hard to believe she will not be there when I get home. Today is Monday Margaret but I have no mom to call.





These are the last few days my mother will be on earth. Her body is located on the fifth floor of a hospital, monitoring for the moment when her heart stops. Her spirit left me last Thursday when she awoke for just a moment smiled, said my name and then went back to sleep. She was 94 in January and we all had hoped that she would make it to a hundred.

Three weeks ago, my mother played nine holes of golf with Margaret, who will soon be the oldest living woman of the Riel clan. Mom was adamant that when she could no longer walk on her own, she did not want to live. I have been preparing for this moment since Dad died six years ago. Where dad was the brain of the marriage, mom was the heart. Both of them loved us all. Their lives were an

inspiration to us on how to live and how to die.

Watching my parents' age, I learned that how we live is a reflection of who we live with. God blessed me with parents that lived long and well. They raised children, they made San Diego a better place to live by their life's. Together the world was right. With them gone all I have left is the memories. What I have learned from the death of my parents is that our memories reflect the lives we have led. Mom's short-term memory was a blessing in that it erased all the bad, so she only lived with the good. I think the lesson that I have learned from these last few days is a good life leads to a good death.

The one absolute truth that my parents lived for was their belief in God. It was not preaching, but example that taught this lesson. Their spiritual lives began with conversion to Catholicism. From the moment I was born, there was never an instant that I doubted their commitment to themselves and our God. I do not have the level of faith that they had, but I have faith because of them. I believe in the goodness of man because of the goodness they shared everyday of their lives with all of us. They taught me that love is not limited by measurement, that love is an endless supply for distribution to the ones you love.

In writing this I am coming to terms with the fact that they are now joined again as I remember them. They are a couple again not apart when Dad died but whole as the heart and mind, they were to me in life. For the last six years she loved us on earth, but her heart was with Dad. She is now at rest in heaven united with God and her husband. My deepest sorrow is not for her, it is for my brothers and sisters who must deal with her death. My parents have blessed me with the gift of faith. I understand what it means to say it is God's will. For the grace of God, I walk this earth secure in the knowledge my mother is at peace with her husband and God



Because of them I am rich in spirit

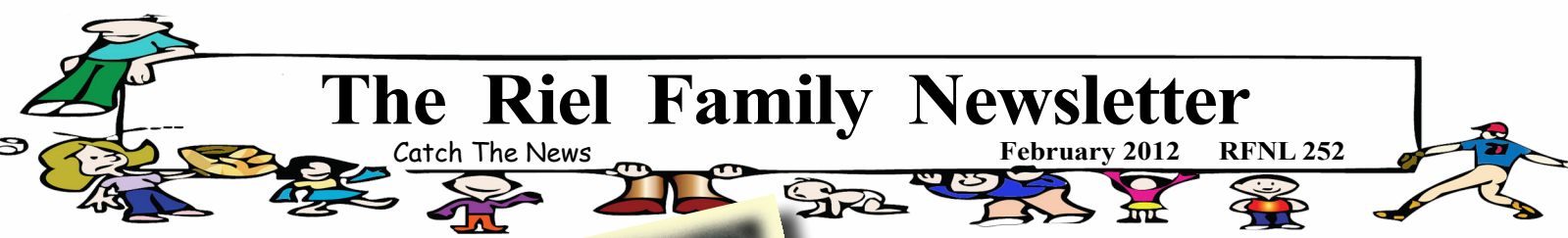


The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch The News

February 2012

RFNL 252



Grandma Edith Remembers When...

Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Grandma Edith (and Grandpa Frank) and talk about her life growing up in Iran, how she met Grandpa and anything else that might come up. The following questions and answers are a recap of that conversation (the full one hour interview is available at Riel.org):

RFNL: Tell me about an average day in your life when you were a young girl.

Edith: ... well I have to think it's not just something that comes ZOOM!

RFNL: Where did you sleep? Did you have your own bedroom?

Edith: Yes, I think so, but it could have been when my brother Romulus and his first wife lived with us. Let's see her first name was Larissa but we called her La La.

RFNL: First wife? What happened? Did they get divorced?

Edith: Well it was an ugly thing...

RFNL: OK we won't go there. When you got up in the morning did you make your own breakfast?

Edith: No we used to have Mahoud.

RFNL: Mahoud? Who is that?

Edith: Well he was everything. He helped the cook, he helped the maids when they would come to do the laundry. He would help them wash and put the cloths out to dry because you didn't

have washers and dryers like today.

RFNL: So did he live there or just come every day?

Edith: No. Mahoud lived with us in fact he was the only one to live with us. He was my age maybe a year or two older.

RFNL: Oh so he was a house boy?

Edith: Yes, but of course he grew up and stayed with my family until my dad died. The reason he stayed was that dad told him that he would hold a certain amount each month from his pay so that when he left, Mahoud would have enough to buy a farm.

So when dad finally died, my sister-in-law told me that they gave him the money and never saw him again. I'm sure he went to buy his farm because land was too expensive in Tehran, he must have gone back to the village he came from.

RFNL: So Mahoud would get you up and arrange for you to have breakfast?

Edith: Yes, we usually would have toast and jam, but nobody had too much in the morning. Lunch and supper were the main meals and also at 4:00 we would have tea and a dessert like cookies, cake or something. So the morning was not a very important meal.



RFNL: So where did you go to school?

Edith: Well this is another thing, under 12 we lived in Tabriz, we had a tennis court, and a zoo. My brother Nico had a zoo there when he lived. He had an accident with gasoline it was terrible. But he loved animals so he had a little zoo.

RFNL: A zoo, what kind of animals did he have? Did he have a giraffe?

Edith: No! No! Nothing like that, he had little animals like rabbits. It was an area about the size of our kitchen with screens to separate the animals. He had horses, fowl, cats, and dogs, we had so many dogs both out and in, he was such an animal lover. Let's see, what else, he loved animals and he loved cars, he would take them all apart and put them together again.

RFNL: How old was Nico?

Edith: Nico? Old, a lot older. Romulus was the oldest and Nico was next, Romulus was 16 or 17 and Nico was a year or two younger. Nico looked very much like our Ed. And Romulus looked a lot like our Jason, very handsome and tall that's why he had one wife then Isa, his second wife, who was only one year older than I am.

So anyways, we lived in a beautiful home in Tabriz. The dining room was my favorite room and it had one, two, three, four, ... four windows from the top almost to the floor. And there was a sitting place by each. Then there were couches but ours were different, they would put a mattress on a wood thing and covered it with oriental rugs hug from the wall, then put pillows all over it. We also had chairs but that is the thing, see this was a dining room but we also used it as a living room. The living room was one step down and a small room. The dining room had a large table from end to end and you could have a lot of people... oh a hundred or more.

RFNL: You could fit a hundred people in your dining room?

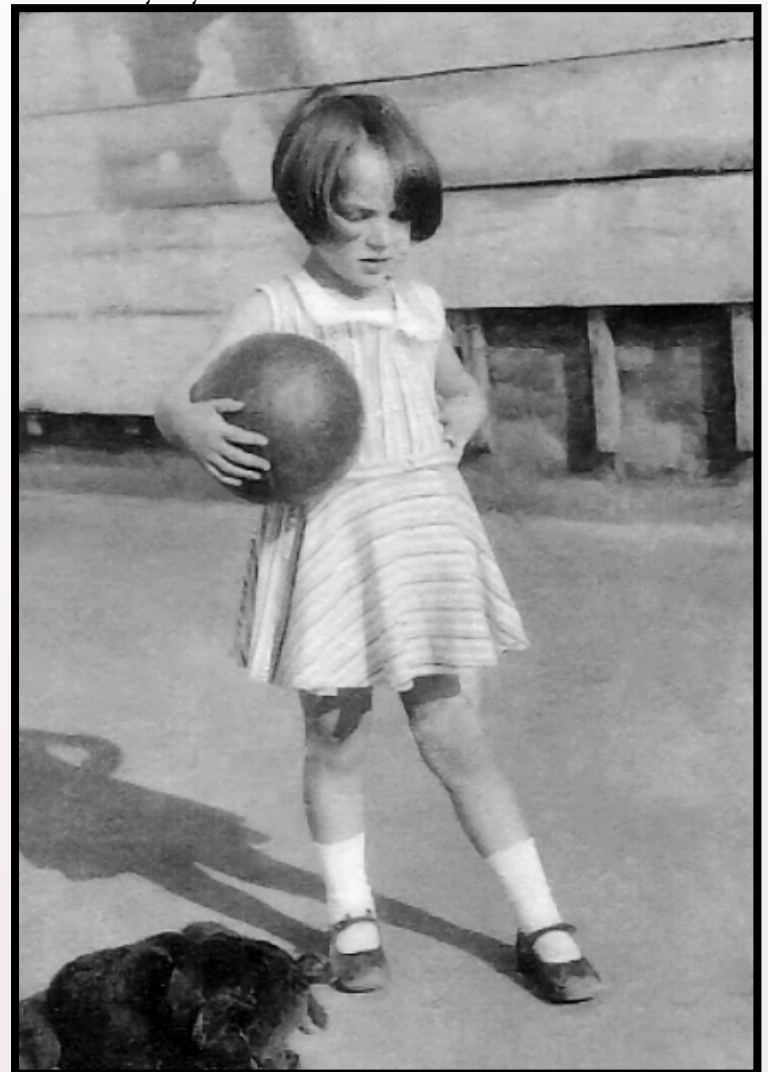
Edith: Yes, there was a balcony that went almost the entire length of the house. There were lots of rooms like an office for my dad, Romulus and his wife had a small suite with their own bathroom. Then my sister and I had a room, that's right! I did share a room with my sister. Then Dads room was huge, really big, it ran almost the whole length of the house. I don't remember if they had a fireplace or something else in his room Mahoud would come every morning with wood and start a fire because it was so cold there.

Oh yes we had another servant before Mahoud but he wasn't very smart, he came to Dad and said he saw bad spirits in the house. You see, he was electrocuted in the kitchen because things were not as they are today. He would tell dad that these spirits would take him and move him and like that. So Dad thought it was time for this servant to leave and he was gone.

Let's see what else happened, oh yes, one time Mahoud came to my mom and said that lady that came to clean the house was skinny when she got here but she is fat now.

RFNL: So did you think she was stealing things?

Edith: Yes, we asked her to take her skirt off and sure enough she had lots of thing but mostly she had food. My mother asked her why in the world she didn't just ask for things. She had taken sugar and flour and things that were not life and death to us but to her, with little babies, meant a lot. But anyways that was the end of her.



RFNL: So was your house as big as the house on Lyndon road?

Edith: Well it was different, it was big and it had a basement where Mahoud lived. Later the house became a hospital. Oh! Here is a story, the house we stayed in, we were renting it, but we were told that an American had lost it in a game of poker.

RFNL: OK so where did you go to school?

Edith: There was a Sisters School that was also part of an orphanage. Dad wanted me to go there because the orphans there were taught French from the time they were very young and their accent was better. Dad wanted me to learn French the right way. That is the thing about Tabriz it was a business center and many languages were spoken there, Russian, Armenian, and so on.

RFNL: So after school what kind of games did you play?

Edith: We used to play "toop aribi", Arabian ball. It was like the baseball you play around here. You had a stick and you hit the ball then you run to places just like you have here. That's why I was wondering if base ball was really American or was it an Arab game that was copied. Let's see what else? Oh yes that jumping thing with squares.

RFNL: Do you mean hopscotch?

Edith: Yes, Hopscotch. But it was very difficult in that, well the first time you could jump with both feet. But the second time you had to do it with only one foot. You also had to hold a stone in the bent part of your other leg the whole time. If you dropped the stone you were out.

RFNL: Did you have a hobby?

Edith: Well mother did try to teach me knitting but I wasn't too thrilled with it. All though the entire time I was traveling to the United States I was knitting Frank a white, wool, less sweater, which was the style back then. And later what I did which was not very smart, I washed it with a load of white shirts, and when it came out it looked like a baby's sweater.

RFNL: Ok so now can you tell me how you met Frank.

Edith: We met in Tehran, Mable Gout, my friend, had a birthday party which I attended. Frank was invited by a French friend who worked for him. Frank's friend had a sister that was also a friend of Mable so they all came to the party.

RFNL: So how old were you?

Edith: This was in December and I was still 17 but of course I would turn 18 in the next few weeks and Frank had just turned 24.

RFNL: Who introduced you to him?

Edith: All I know is that I was talking to a group of friends and Frank was looking at me, so when I turned around to look at him, he would look away real fast. Then after that we got to meet and spent the rest of the part together. He asked me if he could see me again and I told him the only place I could think of would be at the Catholic Church next Sunday. But he didn't come

so I thought he was not interested and forgot about him.

Then there was another party, this time for Maud the sister of Mable. I had heard from Mable that Frank was invited but that he only wanted to go if I was going to be there. At that time I was known as Lilica (sounds like Leleca), that's what everyone in Tabriz called me.

The name Edith was the idea of my brother Romulus, I'm not kidding! Can you believe it! At the time Romulus had read a book and he fell in love with the name Edith. So he asked my Dad if I could be named Edith and my Dad with all the names of the other kids said sure why don't we call her Edith. But when I was brought to be baptized the priest said we don't know of any saint that has the name Edith so they baptized me as Sophia Merica instead. But there was a saint Edith at the time it's just that the priest didn't know about her.

RFNL: So let's get back to the party, since you were going I assume Grandpa went too?

Edith: Yes but after that there was another party put on by his friend and that's when we got really close. His friend set us up in a room in the house, by ourselves, with a fireplace.

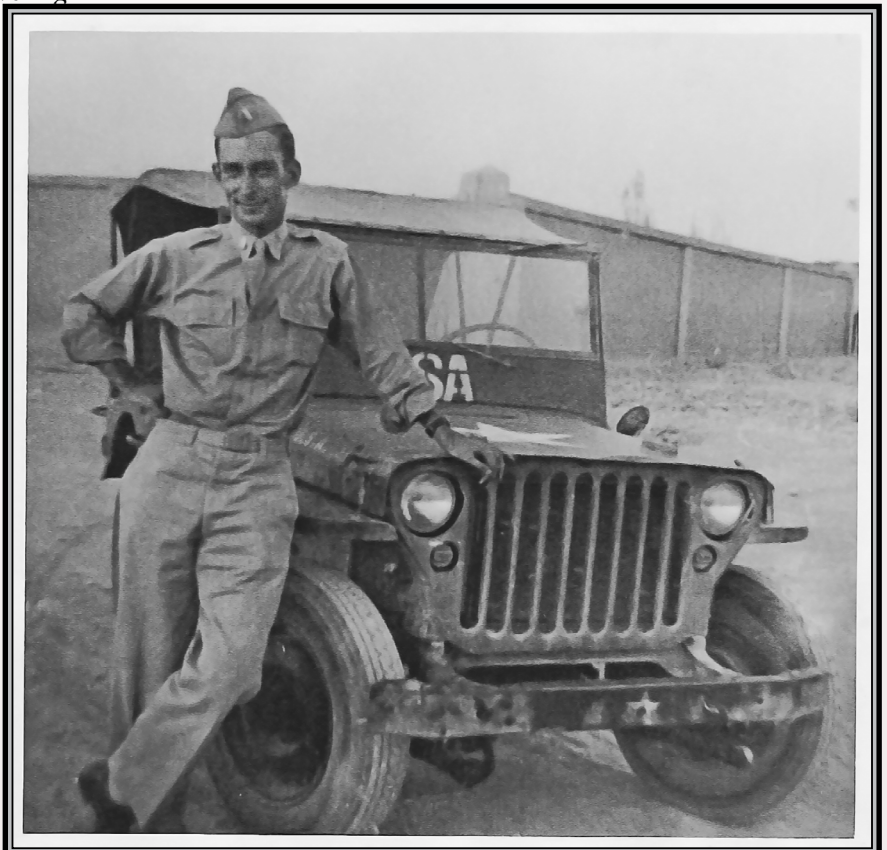
RFNL: Ohhhh I see

Edith: No it wasn't like, that I don't even think we even kissed. So after that day I asked my parents if it was OK to see him and they said it was alright to go to my brother Byron's home and play tennis.

RFNL: Was Byron born after Romulus?

Edith: No. Wait. First it was Romulus, then Nico, Michael, my sister, Byron then me, there were six of us.

RFNL: What was your sister's name?



Edith: Xanthippe

RFNL: Xanthippe (*sounds like Zanthepe*)? What? Did Romulus name her too?

Edith: No, Xanthippe was Socrates wife's name and my sister hated that name and changed it to Marie H el ene. Poor child! Who would name their child with a name like that? My parents didn't have very good named for girls.

RFNL: Ok so you were both sitting at the fire place, did you kiss him? Come on Dad did you kiss her?

Edith: I don't remember.

Frank: I don't remember either.

RFNL: Did you hold hands?

Edith: Oh yes, then after that we would play tennis together or Frank would come to the house for supper.

RFNL: So who won? Who won at tennis?

Edith: I'm sure Frank did. All I knew about tennis was that we had a hall in the house at Tehran and I used to hit the ball against the wall.



Edith and Ophiliea
(Byrons wife) Iran 1945

RFNL: Wait, you used to hit a tennis ball against the wall inside the house?

Edith: Yes, inside the house the wall was about 10' away and that is where I would hit the ball.

RFNL: Did your father like Frank?

Edith: Well, after a few months my brother moved back to Tabriz and my Father said why don't you follow him to live there for awhile? So I went to Tabriz and was shocked when Frank showed up. There was an Army Convoy going through Tabriz so Frank arrange to go along so he could see me. He told me

that he was going back to America and asked me to marry him.

RFNL: What? How old were you? How long had you known each other?

Edith: I think it was the fall after we had met so maybe six or seven or eight months. Anyways, he told me he wanted to marry me and I told him OK but he wanted to ask my Dad and I said don't ask Dad until I talk to my Mom.

RFNL: OK, one thing, did you at least kiss before he asked you to marry him?

Edith: Oh Yes! Anyways, Frank had to leave the next morning in his convoy and it was going to go right by my house. So I

stayed all night in the window to just make sure I would see him pass, but I fell asleep and never saw him.

Then I went home to Tehran to tell my mother who then told my father and he made me give Frank his ring back. It was his gold class ring from Citadel College, which he had attended. Richard now has that ring because he also went to the Citadel. My father said I was too young to get married so for the moment I had to give back the ring and see what happens.

RFNL: So what happened next?

Edith: So I told Frank that I don't care what my father says I am going to wait until he agrees to let us be married. So we started corresponding back and forth. I then took a trip with my mother, sister and Byron to Egypt because Byron had been called into service and that was where he was to join the Navy. I remember writing Frank how beautiful Cairo and Alexandria were and how I wished he could be there with me.

Frank's letter were not what you would call love letters and were very non-committal, so my letters back became the same. But I loved him very much and I used to pray every day that things would work out. Thank God it finally did! Do you know I had to wait almost two years to get all my paper work together? I got my passport right away. But it took forever to get my visa to America.

RFNL: So let me get this straight, after you gave him back his ring you never saw him again until you came to the US?

Edith: Yes, he left, how could I see him? That's why he asked me to marry him so he could take me to the United States.

RFNL: I see, so how long was it between the time he left and the time you two saw each other again?

Edith: I think it was about two years.

RFNL: OK so now let's talk about the trip to America.

Edith: I went to Alexandria to leave for America but the man there told me I had to go back to Cairo to get my paperwork signed. So I went to the US consulate in Cairo and got someone out of bed on a Sunday morning to sign my visa. He came to the door in his pajamas and I didn't think much of it at the time, but later I thought what a strange thing for him to do. But I was scheduled to leave on Monday so, you see, I couldn't wait.

I didn't find out until the last minute if I would be able to leave on the SS Vulcania because there might not be enough room. But there was plenty of room except that when we stopped in Italy, the ship filled up with a lot of war brides like me.

RFNL: Did you have your own room aboard ship?

Edith: No I shared a room with another lady from New York. I don't remember her name but she was a very important person like a director or something.

RFNL: So what was the trip like?

Edith: First we went to Naples and we had to stay for a while due to some mechanical trouble. They told us we could go to Rome if we like, but if we were not back in time the ship would leave without us. So I just stayed on board and worked on Frank's sweater or walked around Naples.

RFNL: Did you go by yourself?

Edith: Oh no! There was a tour and we went in a group. I never went by myself. We went to that place, you know, where they have all the persons captured in the volcano?

RFNL: Pompeii?

Edith: Yes Pompeii, yes it was very interesting with the people all frozen as if they were just doing natural things like cutting food up.

RFNL: So once you left Naples where did you go next?

Edith: Once we left Naples, we went all the way to New York. I remember the first thing I saw was the beautiful blue dome of a building on an island that I later learned was Ellis Island. And I was very impressed thinking what a beautiful place!

RFNL: Little did you know that soon you would be staying there. But before we get there let's go back to your trip across the Atlantic. What did you do on the ship?



Edith: For me there really wasn't very much to do so I used to go to bed early. I used to go and watch people dance or swim; you know I gained a lot of weight on that trip. There was a lot of food and not a lot to do; my roommate was older than me so we didn't do much together.

RFNL: How big was your room?

Edith: The room was very nice and we had our own balcony along with a private bathroom.

RFNL: It looks like your father really took care of all your needs.

Edith: Yes, my father took care of everything, once I got to Alexandria there was this man my father paid to take care of all the arrangements.

RFNL: How did you get to Alexandria?

Edith: My father had arranged for me to fly on a military plane from Tehran to Iraq where I stayed overnight. I was so scared being there all by myself. Then the next day I got on a plane to Cairo then onto Alexandria. The trip was very unpleasant because I just kept remembering my father crying as I left mom

and dad at the airport.

RFNL: Did you ever see them again?

Edith: Yes, I went back to see them right after the twins were born. Poor Frank, he had to take a vacation from work just to stay home and watch the kids while I went back to see my family.

RFNL: Dad you used your vacation to babysit us kids? No wonder you called us rotten little kids!

Frank: Right!

RFNL: Going back to your trip to America, tell me what you brought over with you.

Edith: There was this square box that father had made special for my silverware. It was very strong and very hard to get open. I was very lucky in that I never lost anything the whole trip. It is true that I was very careful and always made sure that I gave my belongings to only the very important people.

RFNL: Did you bring any money with you?

Edith: Yes, I had a \$1,000 dollar bill that my father gave to me. Editor's note: \$1,000 dollars in 1946 is the equivalent of \$11,500 in 2010 dollars.

RFNL: A \$1,000 dollars! Where did you keep it?

Frank: Yes a one thousand dollar bill.

Edith: I kept it in my purse. When I got to New York, my father's friend took me to one of the larger banks in town to deposit my money. When I gave the banker fellow the bill, he told me that he had been in banking for a very long time and had never seen a \$1,000 dollar bill.

RFNL: OK so you're in New York, when was the first time you saw Dad in the United States?

Edith: I wanted to surprise him...

RFNL: Dad, you didn't know she was coming?

Frank: I knew roughly but I didn't know for sure she was on the Vulcania until later and by that time the ship was already there.

Edith: So anyways, I went to Dubuque Iowa by train. I remember I had a top bed in the train.

RFNL: Why Dubuque?

Edith: I was to attend Dubuque University. Back in Tehran my English teacher, Pearl Williams, was from Dubuque University so that is where my father decided I should go.

RFNL: So after you got there what happened?

Edith: I called Frank and told him I was here and he drove up from Purdue University to see me. Here is the funny part, when I took the phone and talked to the fellow I said this is Miss Merica and he said Miss America? I said NO, Miss Merica! He was teasing me all along but I didn't know anything about a Miss America.

RFNL: Who was this? Someone at Purdue?

Edith: No it was the operator, at that time you always had to ask the operator to dial for you.



Edith Merica - Fremont Ohio 1946

RFNL: OK then who answered the phone at Perdue?

Edith: Frank did, he had a phone in his room at the dorm.

RFNL: Then what happened? Was he surprised to hear that you were here?

Edith: No, he knew I was coming. He knew for two years, it just took a long time. When I went to the consulate in Tehran and the fellow there told me it would take another year before I would be allowed to go to the United States I was heartbroken. I went home, I was so pale that I just went to my room and mother called dad and when he saw me so pale and upset he got my visa arranged in just one week.

RFNL: Let me ask a question, do you think... maybe your dad was also holding up your visa?

Edith: I think so, Dad didn't want me to go, but after he saw me... one week and I was ready to go.

RFNL: So Dad the first time you saw here in the United States was that in Dubuque?

Frank: Yes, I drove my car up to see her.

Edith: Yes, my Father did not want me to go to Purdue where Frank was going to school and like I said, he knew of this school from my English teacher back home. She was a minister from Dubuque.

RFNL: Now if I remember right you were supposed to go to

school for about a year before you got married, am I correct?

Edith: Yes but immediately, or a month or two, I wrote to Dad to tell him I was getting married and asked for his blessing, which he finally gave.

RFNL: OK so Dad drives up to see you, do you remember what kind of car he had?

Edith: Oh yes, he had a little Chevrolet with a very little back seat area. To go back there you really had to jump over the seat.

RFNL: Wait a minute, how do you know? Did you get in the back seat with Dad?

Frank: Dad just smiled and didn't say anything

Edith: Maybe, I don't know, maybe just put the seat down.

RFNL: What! You put the seat down?!

Edith: Well, yes but nothing serious, you know. Well the policeman once told us to move along.

RFNL: The policeman? So you were parking?

Edith: Yes we were parking, you know like a lover's lane or something like that.

RFNL: OK, on that revelation I think we will stop and pick this up again sometime in the future.

Edith: Good Idea!



Edna Southham Riel (Frank's Mother) Frank and Edith Riel
Fremont, Ohio 1947

