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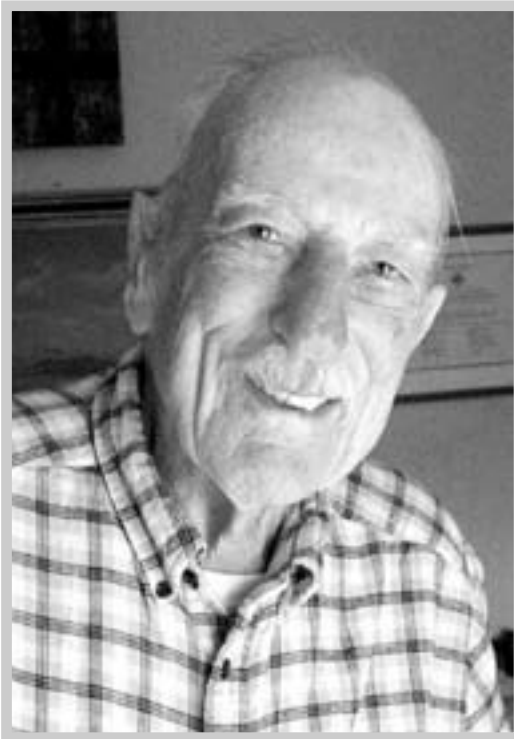


PHOTO BY RALPH STEWART

Francis Sayre celebrates 90 years with a smile.

Story by Pat Waring

Born in the White House, dean of the Washington National Cathedral for nearly 30 years, a dedicated advocate of civil rights, and a world traveler — at 90 years of age the Very Rev. Francis Bowes Sayre Jr. has much to be proud of. Yet during a visit in his comfortable West Chop living room recently, Dean Sayre was, as always, modestly soft-spoken and gracious in every way. Tall, slender, and stately, Dean Sayre has a strong handshake and a twinkling eye. He has a way of making anyone he is speaking with feel the center of his attention.

Several days after marking his 90th birthday at a party with some 50 family members and close Island friends, Dean Sayre reflected on the many memorable years that make up his nine colorful decades of life. His son, Nevin, youngest of the four Sayre children, sat nearby, adding his own memories to his father's.

While his public achievements in the high-profile position of dean of the National Cathedral in Washington are most widely known, Dean Sayre has also been a family man, dedicated to his late wife, Harriet, who died in 2003, and their four children. And his love for the Vineyard — now his year-round home — runs deep too, begun when he came here as a young child.

News clippings and photos from the Washington Post and New York Times assembled by his daughter Happy proclaim the birth of Francis Bowes Sayre Jr. in the White House 90 years ago. Dean Sayre's mother, Jessie, was the daughter of President Woodrow Wilson, and he became the last infant to be born in the White House.

Although he did not grow up there, Dean Sayre visited the White House often as a child and his name appears on a plaque in the building. On his birthday Dean Sayre received a warm greeting from President George W. Bush and his wife Laura, current residents of the house where he was born.

With a Harvard Law School professor father who for a time did diplomatic work in Thailand (then Siam), which took him to other countries, Francis "Frank" Sayre had a cosmopolitan childhood. The family lived in Siam for a year and he attended school there; he later went to boarding school in Switzerland. It was in his early years that Frank's father brought the family to Martha's Vineyard and purchased a summer home here. That house, also on West Chop, remains in the family today.

"We did what all young people do," reminisced Dean Sayre with a smile. "They fish, they swim, they have friends, they love the place — and we loved it too."

One of Dean Sayre's most unusual memories is of hiding in the West Chop shrubbery and watching rum-running ships sail along the coast. He also recalls going into town to rent saddle horses at what is now Bowl and Board and taking rides far and near around the Island.

Committing to the ministry

Educated at Williams College, Dean Sayre then studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City for two years before deciding to commit himself to the ministry. Following the guidance of the Bishop of Massachusetts, he enrolled in the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge. While there, he became a member of the historic Christ Church only a block from Harvard Square.

After his ordination, Dean Sayre would serve as assistant minister at Christ Church, assist as well at Trinity Church in Boston, have his own parish in Cleveland, and take on an often emotionally wrenching four-year stint as chaplain in the United States Navy. It was during World War II and he was stationed on the U.S.S. San Francisco in the Pacific.

"We were in plenty of battles out there. I was talking to one man who was shot as I was talking to him," recalls Dean Sayre, his eyes welling with tears.

In the midst of these years, he met his bride-to-be, Harriet Hart, when she and her parents came to dinner at his family's home.

"I took one look over the table and decided, 'Boy, this is for me,' he recalls, as clearly as if it were just last week. "Harriet was a very pretty girl pursued by many young blades in Washington, but I won."

Married as soon as the war ended, the Sayres had four children. Jessie and Thomas arrived when they lived in Cleveland. By the time Happy (actually Harriet, named for her mother) and Nevin were born, the family was settled in the Deanery on the expansive grounds of the Washington National Cathedral in the capital.

It was, says Nevin, a great place to grow up, with the vast lawns, the gardens, and athletic fields of a school right nearby for playing and exploring.

Family life at the Deanery was not the staid experience one might expect, recalled Nevin. He recounted one evening when the entire family was caught up in a rowdy game of hide-and-seek (in the dark!) when a distinguished visitor arrived at the door. He also remembers walking the grounds at night with his father and the family dog as they went out to catch the rats unearthed by the cathedral construction — the Dean wielding a bow and arrow.

Nevin said that people would see them and whisper in surprise, "Is that Dean Sayre?"

"They still say that," his father chimed in with a hearty laugh.

Building the cathedral

Despite a rich variety of life experiences, when Dean Sayre reminisces, his years at the Washington National Cathedral take the forefront. He played a major role and was instrumental in bringing the massive building project to fruition. When he arrived in 1950 the great church was barely half built. The high tower, the wealth of glowing stained glass windows, and the majestic worship space that distinguish it today were absent. Worshippers and visitors sat on folding chairs in the partially completed building.

"I was the one who raised the money and oversaw what it was spent for," said Dean Sayre. He recalled one dispute over use of fi-

Happy Sayre-McCord. Dean Sayre promoted the arts in the cathedral, bringing in well-known musicians from every style, opera to folk to jazz. Following each performance, Harriet Sayre, a fine hostess, would throw a party at the Deanery.

Woodworking has been a lifetime hobby for Dean Sayre who is an expert at the craft. During his years in Washington he would plan his sermons in the basement wood-working shop, creating furniture for the Vineyard summer house. There are several small examples of his work inside the cathedral and he also did a stone carving among the elaborate designs on the outside.

Travel has been a large part of Dean Sayre's life, from the move to Thailand and European family travels as a boy to his junkets to Italy and Greece to find talent for the cathedral years later. He sought out artists and stone carvers and brought them to Washington where they lived for years working on and adorning the majestic building. "No one in the United States knew how to build a Gothic cathedral," Nevin explained.

His quest to raise money to complete the construction also took him abroad where he visited great churches there to seek support. He says he often received not only money but the gift of enduring friendships with clergy there.

During those 28 years many dignitaries and celebrities, both from the United States and abroad, visited the cathedral. But one very notable visitor who stands out in Dean Sayre's memory was the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with whom he marched in Washington. The great civil rights leader preached at



PHOTO BY SUSAN SAFFORD

The family gathered in Vineyard Haven to celebrate Dean Francis Sayre's birthday. (Back row, from left) Thomas Sayre, Happy Sayre-McCord, Nevin Sayre, Jessie Sayre Maeck, Peter Maeck. (Front row, from left) Kalyan Deck Sayre, Dean Sayre, Solvig Sayre.

nances during which he fought to get the tower completed first while others involved wanted to see the nave completed. Dean Sayre insisted that the tower, there on Washington's highest point, would draw people — and more funds — to the cathedral so construction could be finished. The cathedral did draw many, not only from the United States but visitors from around the world, and its doors were open to all.

"We ministered to everybody," said Dean Sayre, "not just Episcopalians and not just Christians."

From everyday tourists to royalty and presidents, people flocked to the Cathedral. Some dignitaries are buried there, said Dean Sayre, as is Harriet Sayre and as he will be one day.

Years before the Kennedy Center was built, the cathedral served as a center for the performing arts, according to daughter

the cathedral and later joined the Sayres at home for lunch. Nevin, then eight years old, recalls that Dr. King told him stories about his son who was close to the same age. Four days later Martin Luther King Jr. was dead by an assassin's bullet.

"We had a good alliance, we were friends," said Dean Sayre. "His funeral was in Atlanta and I went down with government officials and sat in the front row and bore witness that this man was a Christian and he was. He was a remarkable man."

How appropriate, Nevin commented, that Dean Sayre's Jan. 17 birthday is so close to Dr. King's.

After retirement Dean Sayre worked briefly for the Woodrow Wilson Center, maintaining an office at the Smithsonian Institution. According to Nevin, it was often

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Obituaries

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Richard D. Faust

Richard "Dick" Davis Faust of Edgartown and Chapin, S.C., died on Jan. 27 in the Lexington Medical Center in South Carolina. A memorial service will be held in the spring. A full obituary will appear in a future edition of The Times.

Elmer W. Athearn



Elmer Williams Athearn, known to many as "Mike," died on Friday, Jan. 21, at Long Hill in Edgartown. He was kept comfortable in his declining months and last days by the extraordinarily attentive and compassionate staff at Long Hill and by the visits from his devoted family and friends. He was 89 years old.

Mike Athearn was born Sept. 15, 1915 in his family home on the small farm near Tisbury Great Pond where his brother Leonard still lives today. He was the son of Horace Athearn and Clara (Look) Athearn, the ninth generation of Athearns on Martha's Vineyard. The oldest of four children, Mike shared the usual chores associated with crops and livestock, and as a teenager raised a patch of strawberries as his own enterprise, selling the berries to Cronig's Market in Vineyard Haven. Mike had a keen mind for learning and did well in the West Tisbury School and the Tisbury High School where he graduated at age 15 in 1931. His brother Len says he always had his nose in a book. Through the generosity of his neighbor, Miss Hope Gray, for whom he used to do various chores, he and his friend Everett Whiting spent a year of higher education at the Beacon School, near Boston. Despite being accepted at Amherst College, Mike never went to college after Beacon. He said he didn't see the point, and he returned to live on Martha's Vineyard for the rest of his life except during his war service.

Mike taught himself to play guitar by "sitting with a group of players and doing what they did" and also played tuba, violin, and accordion. The tuba was his band instrument in high school and for many years in the Vineyard Haven Band and with Vineyard Classic Brass with the Dunkle brothers and others. The accordion got him plenty of invitations to "musicales" as the instrument filled in with the random groups of musicians so well. When called upon him to sing one of his trademark songs, however, such as "Clancy's Wooden Wedding", or, "The Ballad of Davy Crockett", he would accompany himself on the guitar. He had a very pleasing, mellow singing voice that was a joy to his family and friends. He sang in the choir of the West Tisbury Congregational Church from 1937 to 1999 when he could no longer climb the steep stairs to the choir loft. Mike played violin in the Vineyard Sinfonietta since its beginning with his friends Claire Duys, David Franz, Heidi Shultz,

and Gale Huntington, among others.

When asked about how it was on the Island during the Great Depression, Mike said it was pretty much like it had always been, not very different. During those years Mike worked at the S.M. Mayhew Co. Store (now Alley's) and for Colby Construction Company and the Cape and Vineyard Electric Company. When the U.S. entered World War Two, Mike enlisted and went to Officers Candidate School in the Army Corps of Engineers. He became a 1st Lieutenant in a group of white officers leading a unit of black men, as it was done in those days. Sometime in his stateside training, the brass decided the army base needed a band, and, as Mike had some musical experience, he was ordered to form a band. The instruments were given to men who had never played them before, but, after Mike showed them the basics, they picked it up quickly and actually played quite well.

The unit was sent to the Pacific, near New Guinea, where their job was to bulldoze landing strips out of the coral on two small islands, providing refueling stations for military aircraft.

Just after enlisting, Mike married Elizabeth Jane Brehm on March 21, 1942; the wedding taking place in the New York City apartment of her parents, George and Katherine Brehm. George Brehm was a successful illustrator who had a summer house in Chilmark. Mike and Elizabeth raised four children, George, Constance, James and John. They had Roger Allen build them a small house on Music Street in West Tisbury where they lived out their days. It was a great place to raise children and also vegetables. Mike spent much of his spare time tending a large vegetable garden, with a little help from his less-than-eager children. Sweet corn was his specialty, keeping his family and neighbors loaded with corn most of the summer. During the fifties and sixties Mike worked at the Cape and Vineyard Electric Company, first as a meter reader and then an appliance service technician until his retirement in 1980. Mike instilled in his children a love for the land and history of Martha's Vineyard, and a consciousness of being connected to the people who lived here before them. On Sundays he would take the kids on walks across the fields and hills, noting the stories associated with the streams and ponds, stone walls, beech trees, and buildings. He would tell stories about Island people, often from previous generations, that described minor events in their lives that their neighbors felt were amusing enough to share widely. He seemed to know everyone on the Island, their parents, who they married and all their cousins. He could laugh himself breathless on occasion.

Mike Athearn was honest, straightforward, and gentlemanly. He didn't believe life was quite so complicated as some made it out to be. He was not ambitious in a career sense but he worked hard at his job, his garden, and his music. He would never describe himself as an intellectual, but he loved to read non-fiction and learn. He didn't talk easily about love or emotions, but his support for his family was constant and solid and they were devoted to him. He resided in one town all his life, he stayed married to one woman for 57 years 'til death parted them, he maintained the Town Clock for about 50 years, he sang in the

choir for 60. He was a steady, dependable, solid citizen of Martha's Vineyard.

Mike Athearn is survived by his brothers Leonard and Clifton; his sister Louise Kernick; his nephew Charles Kernick; and grand-nephew Tyler; his daughter Constance Taylor, son-in-law Robert Taylor and grandchildren Matthew Taylor, Susan Parsons, and Morgan Taylor; his son George Athearn, daughter-in-law Debby Athearn, grandson Brian Athearn and great-grandsons Hunter and Emmett; his son James Athearn, daughter-in-law Deborah Athearn and grandchildren Prudence Athearn, Simon Athearn, and Daniel Athearn; and his son John Athearn. A memorial service was held at the West Tisbury Congregational Church on Jan. 29.

Donations in his memory may be given to the Vineyard Haven Band Inc., P.O. Box 2187, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568, or to the First Congregational Church of West Tisbury, P.O. Box 3000PMB3111, West Tisbury, MA 02575.

M. Karen Fogg

Surrounded by her family on the afternoon of Jan. 18, Karen Fogg, 61, died due to breast cancer. She is survived by her husband of 33 years, Leonard G. Fogg III, and her children, Diana L. Johnson of Oxford, Conn., Douglas L. Fogg and Benjamin D. Fogg both of Edgartown; and three grandchildren, Danielle, Jesse, and Dakota, whom they affectionately called Mema Karen.

She was born in Bridgeport, Conn., and graduated from Harding High School. It's here that she enjoyed spending warm filled days at Seaside Park and listening to the Beatles. Karen loved simple pleasures found among Jehovah's creations, whether that be in Hawaii or California where she lived for a time before her marriage to Leonard. But also here in Martha's Vineyard where she made her home for the last 20-plus years, feeding the neighborly ducks or stray dogs or sharing her appreciation for the beauty found everywhere she went, in her most unique way, were not uncommon for those who knew her. Among the things she took joy in were writing poetry, coloring and sketching with her children and grandchildren.

She and her husband also were the owners of the Red Rooster in Vineyard Haven and worked together in various businesses on Martha's Vineyard. Karen also volunteered her time sharing Bible truths with those whom she met until her last days.

She was the daughter of Alexander and Margaret Antanitis, who both predeceased her, as well as her brother, Donald Paul. She also leaves a sister, Laura Lydia Noble of Milford, Conn., along with her nieces and nephews. A memorial service was held on Jan. 22 at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. Memorial donations may be made to Hospice of Martha's Vineyard, P.O. Box 2549, Oak Bluffs, MA 02557.

Karen will be warmly remembered and greatly missed for her genuine hospitality and the gift she had of making others feel happy, not only by her family and countless spiritual brothers and sisters, but all those whom had the privilege of knowing her.

Anona Kirkland

Anona Holloway Kirkland died peacefully Jan. 18 in her beloved country, Panama. She was 100 years old.

She was born in Hartford, Conn., on Aug. 13, 1904. Anona had a varied career, living and working in North America, Central America, and Europe. She was best known on the Vineyard from her work with the telephone company and the Vineyard Gazette and from her residence in the little red house on D.H.'s Hill on the way to Menemsha.

She was a woman of many talents and interests. Music was a vital part of her life. While enrolled in pre-med at Brown University in Providence, R.I., she also studied the organ. When she moved to Panama she became organist for St. Luke's Cathedral and also played at the various chapels on the canal's military bases.

Anona studied Spanish at Panama University. This skill opened the door to a position in journalism at the Panama Star and Ledger. There she wrote the women's page for 45 years.

Anona participated in many women's organizations including the Inter-American Women's Club, The Soroptimist Club, The Canal Zone Historical Society, and the Women's College Club. These organizations were responsible for helping the people of Panama. They established schools in poor villages. They built the Asilo, a nursing home, and they sent many children to the United States for corrective or life saving treatment.

Anona was a Gray Lady at Gorgas Hospital and worked at the Well Baby Clinic in Balboa.

Anona received numerous

awards for her outstanding contributions to public life. On Jan. 17, 2005 she was recognized as a Notable Citizen by the Commission for Civic and Moral Values, the highest award granted by the civic clubs of the Republic of Panama. She also was awarded the Silver Service Award and The Key to the Locks of the Panama Canal for community service.

In addition, she was honored for more than 40 years of improving relationships between the United States and Panama by the American Society of Panama.

Mrs. Kirkland is survived by a son, William, and a daughter, Jessie Firth Sandifer, six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

Louise S. Norton

Mrs. Louise Schnelle Norton of Caleb's Pond, Chappaquiddick, died at Windemere Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Oak Bluffs early on Feb. 1. She was 96. Mrs. Norton was the wife of Philip B. Norton who predeceased her. She was the mother of Mrs. Phyllis N. Bartol of Milton and Marcia Leeper of Colorado.

A memorial service for Mrs. Norton will be held at a later date. A complete obituary will appear in a future edition of The Times. Arrangements under the care of Chapman, Cole & Gleason Funeral Home, Oak Bluffs, 508-693-1495. For more information or online guest book, visit www.ccgfuneralhome.com.

Preacher Sayre

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said that his dad had "the two best offices in Washington" — one at the cathedral at the District's highest point, the other in the venerable Smithsonian castle overlooking the National Mall.

At home on the Island

Settled on the Vineyard full time, both Sayres became active members of Grace Episcopal Church. Dean Sayre expresses the warmest affection for the small church which he attended as a summer visitor for years and says he never misses a Sunday. For some time he would occasionally preach and lead worship there until a few years ago when he decided, "no more services for me." Now every Sunday morning finds him settled in the second pew, left side, worshipping and greeting his many Grace Church friends after the last hymn.

On January 16, those friends surprised Dean Sayre after the service with a home-baked chocolate cake and a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday." Before heading home to an afternoon of celebration, Dean Sayre sat with his coffee and cake as a stream of parishioners wished him many happy returns. Harriet became involved in civic activities, including taking many roles at Martha's Vineyard Community Services, from volunteer to president of the board, and was a co-founder of the Possible Dreams Auction. Dean Sayre turned his attention to the Martha's Vineyard Hospital where he served on the board of directors and later as its president. He was a familiar and comforting presence at the hospital as chaplain there for many years.

Dean Sayre's late brother, Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Sayre lived here on the Island for many

years as well. His third sibling, Eleanor, lived in Cambridge.

Dean Sayre loved fishing throughout his life, and only recently stopped sailing himself. He purchased one of the first Wasque 21's from the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard and named it "L'homme dieu," after the shoals in Nantucket Sound, a perfect name for the boat of a man of the cloth. Happy remembers early morning fishing trips, the youngsters wakened early and loaded into the boat while Harriet brought breakfast. Another of his favorite pastimes was spear fishing for tautaug off the rocks at West Chop.

Dean Sayre's service at the cathedral is marked in many ways, among them by a carving on a stone illustrating the West Chop light and a figure of Dean Sayre himself, fishing from a rock.

Dean Sayre's life these days centers on family visits, which he loves, regular church attendance, and a regimen of walking that would put many younger people to shame. His daily schedule always includes a walk at least a mile long, in some picturesque Island location.

"That buoys up my health," said Dean Sayre, listing the Polly Hill Arboretum, East Chop Drive, and West Chop as among his favorite walking spots. "All over the Island, there's hardly a road I don't know."

He enjoys keeping up his correspondence with his many friends all over the world, and according to Happy is determined to keep the woodpile full, bringing home wood from his walks and chopping it to size.

Frank Sayre seems far younger than his 90 years, with his quick wit, fascinating stories, engaging smile and impeccable manners. "I didn't think I would hit the 80 mark, and here I am just past the 90 mark," he said, with pleasure and gratitude. ♦