

# Florence Agnes Henderson (1934-2016)

By Jerry Long



Florence Agnes Henderson (1934- 2016) was an American actress. With a career spanning six decades, she is best known for her starring role as Carol Brady on the ABC sitcom *The Brady Bunch*. Henderson also appeared in film, as well as on stage, and hosted several long-running cooking and variety shows over the years. She appeared as a guest on many scripted and unscripted (talk and reality show) television programs and as a panelist on numerous game shows. She was a contestant on the TV show, *Dancing with the Stars*, in 2010.

In her last years she hosted her own talk show, *The Florence Henderson Show*, and cooking show, *Who's Cooking with Florence Henderson*, on Retirement Living TV.

She was the youngest of 10 children, born on 14 February 1934, in Dale, Spencer County, Indiana, a small town in the southwestern part of the state. She was a daughter of Elizabeth Pauline Elder, a homemaker, and Joseph Robert Henderson, a tobacco sharecropper. She was taught to sing at the age of two by her mother, who had a repertoire of 50 songs. By the time she was eight, her family called her "Floreny", and by age 12, she was singing at local grocery stores.

She attended St. Bernard Elementary School in Rockport, IN for eight years. She entered St. Francis Academy in Owensboro, Kentucky in 1947 and graduated there on 8 June 1951. Shortly

after graduating from St. Francis she went to New York City, enrolling in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.[She was an Alumna Initiate of the Alpha Chi chapter of Delta Zeta sorority.

For a detailed history of her career see her biography on the Internet site, Wikipedia.org.

Henderson married her first husband, Ira Bernstein, on 9 January 1956 in New York. They had four children together before divorcing in 1985. On 4 August 1987, she married her second husband, hypnotherapist Dr. John George Kappas, whom she had met when he treated her for depression and stage fright in the early 1980s. They remained married until his death in 2002. Henderson had five grandchildren.

Florence died on 24 November 2016, at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California, at the age of 82. She had been hospitalized the previous day. According to her manager, Kayla Pressman, Henderson died of heart failure. Three days before her death, Henderson had attended the recording of Dancing with the Stars to support her friend and former on-screen daughter Maureen McCormick, who was a contestant. Pressman stated that Henderson was not ill prior to her sudden hospitalization and that her death was a "shock". She was cremated, and her ashes interred at Westwood Village Memorial Park Cemetery in Los Angeles.



**Indiana Birth Certificate:**

PLACE OF BIRTH		INDIANA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH		Local No. ....	
DIVISION OF VITAL STATISTICS		CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH		Registered No. <b>7117</b>	
1. County of <u>Spencer</u>					
Township of <u>Center</u>					
Town of _____		(If birth occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number)			
City of _____		(No. _____ St.)			
2. FULL NAME OF CHILD <u>Florence Agnes Henderson</u>					
If child is not yet named, make supplemental report. (Please Print Child's Name)					
3. Sex <u>F</u>	If plural births	4. Twin, triplet, or other <u>1</u>	5. Number in order of birth _____	6. Premature <u>no</u>	7. Legitimate <u>yes</u>
Date of Birth <u>2-14-1924</u>		(Month) (Day) (Year)			
9. Full name FATHER <u>Jos Henderson</u>			18. Full maiden name MOTHER <u>Elizabeth Elders</u>		
10. Postoffice Address <u>Dale Ind</u>			19. Postoffice Address <u>Dale Ind</u>		
11. Color or Race <u>white</u>		12. Age at last Birthday <u>56</u>		20. Color or Race <u>white</u>	
		(Years)		21. Age at last Birthday <u>38</u>	
				(Years)	
13. Birthplace (State or country) <u>Kentucky</u>			22. Birthplace (State or country) <u>Kentucky</u>		
14. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. <u>Farmer</u>			23. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as housekeeper, typist, nurse, clerk, etc. <u>Housewife</u>		
15. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, sawmill, bank, etc. <u>far</u>			24. Industry or business in which work was done, as own home, lawyer's office, silk mill, etc. <u>Home</u>		
17. Total time (years) spent in this work <u>Life</u>			25. Were precautions taken against ophthalmia neonatorum? <u>yes</u>		
26. Number of children born to this mother, including present birth. <u>10</u>		Number of children, of this mother, now living, including present birth. <u>9</u>		(b) Born alive, but now dead. <u>1</u>	
27. If stillborn, period of gestation _____ {months or weeks}		28. Cause of stillbirth _____		{Before labor _____ During labor _____}	
CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR MIDWIFE					
I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child, who was <u>born alive</u> at <u>5 A. m.</u> on the date above stated. (Born alive or stillborn)					
{When there was no attending physician} or midwife, then the father, householder, etc., should make this return.		(Signature) <u>E. J. Dunton</u>			
Filed <u>Mar. 4</u> 19 <u>24</u>		Att. Phys. _____ (Attending physician, midwife, householder*)			
<u>E. J. Dunton</u> HEALTH OFFICER		Address <u>Dale Ind</u>			



Memorial in Dale, Spencer County, IN – in a little park on the south side of 114 East Medcalf St. (IN 62) just east of its intersection with South Wallace St., across from an old grain elevator. Monument marks the almost-spot where Florence Henderson was born in 1934 – the actual spot is now buried under northbound US-231.



**Spencer County, Indiana 1940 Federal Census – Town of Rockport:**

Henderson. Joseph. <sup>OR</sup>	Head.	0	M	W	69	M	No	8	8	Kentucky
— Elizabeth	Wife	1	F	W	44	M	No	7	7	Kentucky
— Pauline	Daughter	2	F	W	21	BS	No	11	9	Kentucky
— Joseph. Jr.	Son.	2	M	W	19	S	Yes	12	10	Kentucky
— Carl	son	2	M	W	18	S	No	7	7	Kentucky
— Marseline	Daughter	2	F	W	15	S	Yes	7	7	Kentucky
— Ilean.	Daughter	2	F	W	15	S	KS	7	7	Kentucky
— John.	SON	2	M	W	13	B	Yes	5	5	Kentucky
— Thomas	son.	2	M	W	11	S	Yes	4	4	Kentucky
— Emily	Daughter.	2	F	W	8	S	Yes	2	2	INDIANA
— Florence	Daughter	2	F	W	6	S	Yes	0		INDIANA



**Spencer County, Indiana 1950 Federal Census – Town of Rockport:**

Henderson, Joseph R. Head	W	M	75	Wid	Ky	Kentucky
— Emily J. Daughter	W	F	18	Mar	Ind	Indiana
— Florence Daughter	W	F	16	Mar	Ind	Indiana



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 3 June 1951, p.1B**

95 Members of St. Francis Class To Be Graduated This Week



**Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 28 August 1952, p.12B:**

Florence Henderson To  
Head "Oklahoma" Musical

Miss Florence Henderson, New York, Rockport, and Owensboro, will have the leading role in the road show of "Oklahoma," Rogers-Hammerstein musical extravaganza this season. The show will open in New Haven, Aug. 29 and is booked through the South and West for eight months. Miss Henderson was a member of the cast of "Wish You Were Here" at the Imperial theatre, New York. this summer, having left this show to go into rehearsal for "Oklahoma."

Miss Henderson has been seen in television in New York, having taken part in one of Kate Smith's matinee appearances. Previous to her appearance in "Wish You Were Here," she attended the American Academy, New York.

Miss Henderson has been seen in home talent plays in Owensboro given as benefits for the Spastic Home and School, and was a voice pupil of Mrs. Robert W. Smith before going to New York to study dramatic art. She was the subject of a complimentary paragraph in Walter Winchell's column in the New York Daily Mirror when he went into rehearsal for "Oklahoma." Miss Henderson attended St. Frances Academy, and is a daughter of Mrs. Joseph R. Henderson, of Rockport.



**Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, 26 April 1953: p.2B :**

Former Student Here Becomes Overnight Success As Singing Star of 'Oklahoma'



Left: Cast in the role of Laurey, the pretty young girl from Rockport, plays opposite Ralph Lowe as Curly. Her leading part includes four solos and five costume changes. The score's favorite song for Florence is "Out of My Dreams." Right: Florence Henderson, a 1951 graduate of St. Frances Academy, stars in the lead of the "Oklahoma!" road company.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 20 October 1964, p.1A:**

**Hugh Sportscenter Crowd Greet Singing Florence**

By Mary Jane Porter, Messenger-Inquirer

"Make someone happy, make just one someone happy..."

And that is exactly what Monday night's concert at the Sportscenter did. Florence Henderson, singing at her peak best, drew ovation after ovation following her selections. Performing equally well for the near capacity crowd were Bill Hayes and Skitch Henderson, who accompanied Miss Henderson.

The more than 5,500 persons applauded the beautiful Miss Henderson who performed the concert in an "informal manner, because we all feel so much at home."

Miss Henderson opened the program with "It's Wonderful To Be Home," and "Moon River," recalling the times she spent near the Ohio River. She then vocalized a medley of arrangements from Broadway shows, which included "76 Trombones," "Make Someone Happy," "Hey, Look Me' Over," and "Fascination."

During one part of the program, Miss Henderson presented members of her family, relatives, and the many friends who played an important part in her life. They included Mrs. Christine Johnson Smith, who opened the concert by introducing Miss Henderson. Miss Johnson, former Metropolitan opera star, started Florence on her road to stardom.

Skitch Henderson, accompanying Miss Henderson with the finest in piano music, was given the spotlight and presented a series of George Gershwin arrangements, which brought for him rounds of applause.

Next on the program was Bill Hayes, who played nearly as big a part in the program as Miss Henderson. Hayes, in his rich baritone voice, burst out in such songs as "Just In Time," "People," "I've Got A Girl," "San Francisco," and "What Kind of Fool Am the latter of which brought down the house.

Hayes also reminisced of his family and relatives born in and near Owensboro, his grandfather a native of Henderson, and his father a native of Owensboro.

Hayes and Miss Henderson also combined as a duet for the audience. They sang numbers which they remembered singing together in several engagements back in 1959. One which rang a good note with the crowd was "Back Home in 'Rockport,' Ind."

Following intermission, Skitch opened the second session with music by Dick Rodgers.

Miss Henderson drew cheers from the crowd with several selections from the "Sound of Music."

The program was carried on in a light and cheerful manner, drawing the audience close to Miss Henderson, who touched the hearts of many Owensboroans Monday night.

She said she was grateful for the benefit of the Florence Henderson Voice Scholarship fund, established at Brescia College in 1963. The scholarship is awarded to a talented vocalist for training at Brescia, with the hope that he or she will someday delight millions with her talent and vocal ability just as Florence has done. (Pictures on p.3B)



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 30 March 1980, p.8C:**

COMING TO THE RIVERMONT  
Monday, March 31 to Saturday, April 5

**FLORENCE  
HENDERSON**  
"Star of The Brady Bunch"  
Returning to Her Home-  
town To Sing all of Your  
Favorites!  
Two Shows Nightly  
Call Box Office for Reservations

*Executive Inn  
Rivermont*

One Executive Blvd., Owensboro, Ky. 42301 — Phone 926-8000  
Toll Free: Ky. 800-482-8480 — All Other States 800-626-1936



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 3 April 1980, p.1D:**

Dr. Flo... Florence Henderson honored with doctorate from Brescia

By Stewart Jennison, Messenger-Inquirer

It's Dr. Florence Henderson now. The praise flowed and the star glowed Wednesday during an academic convocation at Brescia College in Owensboro when the native of Dale, was conferred the honorary degree Doctorate of Humane Letters.

The assemblage of church, college, political and operatic dignitaries, packed the Brescia science auditorium.

The star of stage and television made sure the audience was entertained. "Can I kiss the Bishop?" she asked after presentation of the degree by the Most Rev. Henry J. Soenneker, Bishop of Owensboro. (She did.)

She recalled how, as a child at St. Frances Academy in Owensboro, teachers frequently required her to sing their favorite songs as recompense for classroom misbehavior. And there was the priest who praised her voice but was annoyed by her Hoosier accent during Gregorian chants.

Miss Henderson was praised for her dedication to her family throughout her 20-year professional career by her first professional voice coach, Christine Johnson Smith of Owensboro, former mezzo-contralto with the Metropolitan Opera Company.

"Her peers agree she has learned her craft well. She is a capital-letter P. R. O. pro. She has not sought flamboyant publicity. The fact she has kept her basic values intact is nothing short of a miracle," Mrs. Smith said.

Sister George Ann Cecil, president of the college, said she had written Miss Henderson every year since 1976 in hopes her schedule would allow a trip to Owensboro for the degree presentation.

Finally, Miss Henderson wrote back, "Thank you for your patience, understanding and persistence."

"We here at Brescia are extremely proud of you and your achievements," Sister George Ann said, adding special thanks for the voice student scholarship fund created by Miss Henderson in 1963.

Seven recipients of the scholarship were present for the ceremony, including the first, Dianne Norman Gatwood, who sang the program processional, "The Sound of Music," and Marcia Toon, the present holder of the scholarship, who sang "Climb Every Mountain" for the recessional.

Sister George Ann praised the singer as a "model wife, mother and professional" who has shown "a continuing concern" for her friends and family in the Owensboro area.

The audience included Miss Henderson's mother, Elizabeth Mosbacker of Florida, sisters Marcelline Mason of Owensboro and Eileen Schmidt of Tell City, and youngest daughter, Lizzie.

Luck and miracles don't make a star, Miss Henderson said, listing several of the "so many along the way who made it possible."

The list began with her mother who taught her to sing – "She claims I knew 50 songs by age two" and nine older brothers and sisters who offered encouragement and not jealousy.

The list grew to include those who provided spiritual, musical and personal guidance: Sister Marguerite Yonker, Sister Cecilia Payne, Father Gerard Ellsperman, Father Henry O'Bryan, Father

Charles Saffer, Sister Gemma Gettelfinger, Sister Ruth Marie, Sister Mary Auxilium, Sister Jean Fuqua, Ruth Steele, Elizabeth Warner, Ruth Helen Wright, Ben Medley and Mrs. Smith.

Father O'Bryan was identified as one who required Miss Henderson to sing Irish songs in retribution for naughtiness. When Miss Henderson headed for New York, her first venture away from the Ohio Valley, Medley provided the financing while "Christine drew me subway maps."

Miss Henderson thanked her "incredible" family. "The children always offered encouragement. It was never 'Are you going to work?'"

"God bless each of you and keep you well," Miss Henderson said. "Thanks, I'll try to make you proud."

After the degree presentation, Owensboro Mayor J. R. Miller read the proclamation of "Dr. Florence Henderson Day" and presented a key to the city.

"Can I give all the city workers the day off?" she inquired. "Maybe the rest of the day," the mayor said.

The crowd then moved to the Brescia library for a champagne reception. Miss Henderson was greeted at the door by six children of college faculty and staff members who sang the theme song from TV's "The Brady Bunch" which starred Miss Henderson from 1969 to 1974.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 1 April 1980, p.1B:**

Florence comes back for a visit



Florence Henderson, claimed as a native daughter by both Kentucky and Indiana, has come home at least to Kentucky.

Instead of the one-day homecoming visit and concert which marked her triumphant return from Broadway to Owensboro in 1964, Miss Henderson has scheduled a solid week of performances at the Owensboro Executive Inn Rivermont. At Monday's opening night show, Miss Henderson paid tribute in song to both sides of the Ohio River during a new nightclub act which premiered last month in Las Vegas.



On Wednesday, the singer, actress and graduate of the old St. Frances Academy in Owensboro will be awarded an honorary degree from Brescia College. Mayor J.R. Miller is expected to read a proclamation which will make it, once again, Florence Henderson Day in Owensboro.

Miss Henderson was born in Dale, and grew up in Rockport.

In April 1964, Miss Henderson was honored at Brescia College during the first Florence Henderson Day. Christine Johnson Smith of Owensboro, a former Metropolitan Opera Singer who coached Miss Henderson in voice, opened the 1964 program and will repeat the honor this Wednesday as keynote speaker for the Brescia degree presentation ceremony.

The last special day came in October 1964, when Miss Henderson was joined by then-Tonight Show bandleader Skitch Henderson and singer Bill Hayes for a Sportscenter concert to benefit a Brescia College voice scholarship in her name.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 11 September 1992, p.1D:**

**At the River Park: The first show**

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

There was a time when Owensboro was the city in Florence Agnes Henderson's life.

That was more than 40 years ago, when a teen-age girl caught a passenger bus near her home in Rockport, Ind., before dawn each morning so she could come to Owensboro as a student at the St. Frances Academy.

"Owensboro was just the turning point in my life," the internationally known singer-actress said in a recent telephone interview from her California home.

"I had heard about St. Frances' music program and I wanted to attend," Henderson recalled. "A friend and I rode a bus to Owensboro every day. The tuition must have been very small, but it must have been a lot for my parents."

She was the youngest of 10 children of Joseph and Elizabeth Elder Henderson, sharecroppers who moved several times in western Kentucky and southern Indiana.

"Eight of my brothers and sisters were born in Kentucky around Owensboro," Henderson said. She was born in Dale, Ind., on Feb. 14, 1934, and grew up in Rockport.

Saturday night - 40 years after she landed her first Broadway role - Henderson comes home to help dedicate Owensboro's new \$17 million RiverPark Center for the performing arts.

"I'm so thrilled," she said. "Two of my sisters, so many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends will be there."

The center is located near the base of the bridge Henderson crossed so many mornings and afternoons during her high school years.

Although Henderson hasn't been visible in Owensboro much through the years, she said she gets back occasionally to visit friends and family.

Her first Owensboro homecoming was in October 1964 when she performed at the Sportscenter with Skitch Henderson, then the "Tonight Show" band leader, and singer Bill Hayes to benefit a Brescia College voice scholarship established in her name in 1963.

Brescia honored her with a Florence Henderson Day in 1964 and again in 1980. She appeared for a week at the Executive Inn Rivermont in 1980 and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Brescia that week.

Henderson has plugged the city on television time after time through the years, mentioning it in appearances on The Nashville Network, where her cooking show has been a staple for eight years, and even working it into the scripts of several episodes of "The Brady Bunch."

Remember the episode where she played the dual roles of Carol Brady and her grandmother from Owensboro?

Her mother taught her to sing and claimed young Florence knew 50 songs by age 2. But it was at St. Frances, then located in the 500 block of Allen Street, that she began developing into an entertainer.

"I really started singing in the choir in school," Henderson said. "They gave me more solo work as they learned I could sing. Then I sang with a country band and really anyone who would ask me."

One was the Clayton Spurlock Orchestra, a well-known area band.

"I sang for Kiwanis, Elks, Democrats and Republicans," Henderson recalled. And she won the title role in her high school operetta, "Jerry of Jericho Road."

Then there was the time Horace Heidt, a radio talent scout, brought his show to the Sportscenter.

"They said we could audition at WOMI," she recalled. "Jane Powell was my favorite person in the world. I went to all her movies. I didn't know how to audition, so I took one of her records along - 'It's A Most Unusual Day.' It was in the wrong key for me but I didn't care.

"They asked if I had music. I said, 'No, but I have a record I can sing along with.' So that's what I did."

She laughs at the memory now.

"I did not get on Horace Heidt's show," Henderson said. "My sister wrote a letter and sent it backstage telling him he had picked the wrong person because her sister was going to be a big star."

She told that story on "Nashville Now" recently and received a letter from the woman who won that contest all those years ago.

A high school friend, Ruth Helen O'Bryan (now Wright), was concerned that Henderson would never get a chance to develop her talent.

"She asked her family to hear me sing and help me get to New York," Henderson recalled. "They thought I had a terrific voice and took me to Christine Johnson Smith," a former Metropolitan Opera mezzo-contralto who had settled in Owensboro.

"She thought I had talent," Henderson said, "and agreed to coach me in voice. And her uncle, Ben Medley, paid for me to go to New York."

That was 1951 - about four months after graduation from St. Frances.

"You grow up not seeing a building over two stories tall and then go to New York with all the skyscrapers," Henderson recalled. "It was a big change."

She enrolled at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, a two-year program.

"At the end of the first year, I went to an audition," Henderson said.

"Everyone else had been and no one had gotten a job. They told me to try.

Someone loaned me some music and a swimsuit."

After she had auditioned, they asked her to model the swimsuit. "Of course, it didn't fit at all," she laughs today.

A stagehand found some safety pins and she tried to pin the suit together. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Josh Logan, the famous Broadway director, got a big laugh. When Henderson was called back for an audition, he remembered her. She landed a one-line role in "Wish You Were Here" and never stopped working.

Then came a role in the national touring company of "Oklahoma!" Her father died the day before it opened. There was no understudy and the show went on.

Later, when Hollywood filmed "Oklahoma!", Shirley Jones got the Henderson role.

For Henderson, the big break was the title role in the Broadway production of "Fanny" in 1955.

She moved to television in 1958, appearing on "TV Sing Along" and then "The Today Show" in 1959-60.

Henderson returned to the stage in 1967, appearing in a revival of "South Pacific." But it was a sitcom in 1969 that ensured that she would become a household name forever.

Today, reruns of "The Brady Bunch," which left the air in 1975, are seen in 130 countries - second only to "I Love Lucy," Henderson says. She's seen Italian-, French- and Japanese-dubbed versions.

"I still get mail from all over the world," she said. "The kids who were watching when the show came on have kids of their own now and they're fans. It just keeps going. Parents don't have to worry about the show. If I had young children today, I don't know what I would let them watch.

" 'The Brady Bunch,' I guess."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 12 September 1992, p.1A:**

**Henderson, who inspires 'Carol Brady fixations,'  
glad to be back in Owensboro**

By Keith Lawrence

OK, she did have a date with Barry Williams - the actor who played her TV son, Greg Brady - but they didn't "date."

"I was not the Cher of 'The Brady Bunch' set," singer-actress Florence Henderson jokingly told a homecoming news conference Friday in Owensboro. "Barry was like a son. He was a friend."

Williams' biography, a best-seller this spring, made tabloid headlines with the revelation that he had a crush on Henderson and dated her once.

Through the years, she said, she's discovered that a lot of young men had "Carol Brady fixations."

The woman who will always be Carol Brady to millions of people around the world said she likes Owensboro audiences. "They understand my humor - which tends to be somewhat rowdy."

Henderson is in town as one of the headliners for tonight's gala opening of the \$17 million RiverPark Center for the performing arts.

The Bradys are headed for the silver screen, she said. Paramount has expressed interest in a Brady movie. But it would have a new, lookalike cast, Henderson said. And be set in 1972.

There's been talk of using original cast members as neighbors. But, she said, "I don't want to be a neighbor of the Bradys. I am a Brady."

Co-star Robert Reed, who died early this year of AIDS complications, "lived a very fine life and died a very courageous death," Henderson said. She said she was "very disturbed" by the way the tabloid press treated his death.

And, yes folks, there were two Tigers (the Brady dog). The first one got fired for demanding more money, she said. And the second was "so dumb. He couldn't do any tricks."

"The Brady Bunch" remains so popular, Henderson said, because "kids don't want to come home and watch what they have at home. They want to see something idealized."

And she recalled a comedian who once asked the audience to sing along on "The Star-Spangled Banner." When no one in the audience could remember all the words, he asked them to sing the Brady theme.

The whole audience knew it.

Henderson, who was born in Dale, Ind., moved to Rockport as a 4-year-old. She rode a passenger bus to Owensboro every day of her high school years to attend St. Frances Academy.

"I can't tell you how emotional this is for me," she said of the RiverPark Center opening. "It's such a great achievement for Owensboro. I'd rank it among the best (theaters) I've been in."

She added: "It's so exciting to me to think that Owensboro has its own symphony. I'm looking forward to singing with the orchestra."

Coming home to perform is always special, Henderson said. "You can appear all over the world . . . but appearing before hometown folks is the most nerve-wracking. They've known you since when."

About 12 of her family members will be in the audience tonight including three sisters. "They would all be here if I could have afforded the tickets," Henderson said.

She said she hopes to return to Owensboro to do her nightclub show in the RiverPark Center's Cannon Hall.

"That would be the ultimate!"



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 10 September 1993, p.1D:**

RiverPark Center:

Henderson appearance offers singing and reminiscences

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Florence Henderson is coming home Monday night to raise money for Brescia College.

Almost a year to the day after she headlined the opening gala for the RiverPark Center, Henderson will be back in RiverPark's Cannon Hall - singing and reminiscing about growing up in Owensboro and Rockport, Ind.

The 7 p.m. benefit is designed to raise money for Brescia's Father Charles Saffer Chair of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Henderson was a student of Saffer's at Owensboro's old St. Frances Academy, a school named for Mother Frances Gardner of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth.

Saffer, an original member of the Brescia faculty, created the college's psychology department and counseling program. He died in 1989.

Anne Damron, coordinator of the event, said Henderson is donating her performance fee and paying all her own expenses.

She will be presented a bracelet commemorating her Owensboro connections, Damron said. Links will show Kentucky and Indiana, St. Frances, Brescia and the RiverPark Center.

Henderson will be performing show tunes, pop and country music and talking about childhood and show business memories.

The show includes two 45-minute sets with an intermission.

She's scheduled to appear on The Nashville Network's "Nashville Now" tonight at 8 and may be talking about the show.

Henderson, a 1951 graduate of St. Frances, found success on Broadway and in Hollywood after leaving Owensboro.

"Owensboro was the turning point in my life," she said last year in an interview.

She was born in Dale, Ind., on Feb. 14, 1934, and grew up in Rockport, the youngest of 10 children of Joseph and Elizabeth Elder Henderson.

"I had heard about St. Frances' music program and I wanted to attend," Henderson said. "A friend and I rode a bus to Owensboro every day. The tuition must have been very small. But it must have been a lot for my parents."

It was at the old high school in the 500 block of Allen Street that Henderson began developing her talents.

In 1950, she won her first stage role - the lead in the high school's production of the operetta "Jerry of Jericho Road."

Henderson also took private voice lessons from Christine Johnson Smith, a former Metropolitan Opera mezzo-contralto who had settled in Owensboro. Then, with financial support from local backers, she headed for New York to enroll in the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Then came a one-line role in Josh Logan's "Wish You Were Here" on Broadway, the lead in the national touring company production of "Oklahoma" and finally, the big break - the lead in the Broadway production of "Fanny" in 1955.

That was followed by the lead in the national company of "The Sound of Music" and the lead in the Broadway production of Noel Coward's "The Girl Who Came to Supper."

Henderson moved to television in 1958 and became a regular member of "The Today Show" cast for a year beginning in 1959. She also was the first woman to host the "Tonight Show."

But it was a 1969 sitcom - "The Brady Bunch" - for which she'll always be known.

"I still get mail from all over the world," Henderson said last year. "The kids who were watching when the show came on have kids of their own now and they're fans. It just keeps going."

She's hosted a cooking show on The Nashville Network for the past nine years.

Henderson's first Owensboro homecoming was in October 1964 when she performed at the Sportscenter with Skitch Henderson, then the "Tonight Show" band leader, and singer Bill Hayes. Proceeds from that concert went to a Brescia voice scholarship established in Henderson's honor the previous year.

Brescia honored her with a Florence Henderson Day in 1964 and again in 1980. She appeared for a week at the Executive Inn Rivermont in 1980 and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Brescia that week.

The \$100 VIP tickets for Monday night's performance have sold out. But \$30 and \$10 tickets are still available. They can be ordered by calling the RiverPark Center box office at 685-ARTS or (800) 285-ARTS.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 28 November 1999, p.1A:**

## Natives honored as `hometown heroes'

By Sharon Wright, Messenger-Inquirer

Mark and Cliff and Jody were there, sipping red wine from short plastic cups, mingling in a hallway lined with black-and-white publicity photos and captions that reduced to a paragraph or two their contributions to sports, entertainment and politics.

Diamonds and gold glittered among the bottles in the lobby of the tourist commission building before the famous, the near-famous, their relatives and stand-ins were whisked from a reception to a \$30 dinner and induction ceremony at the Sportscenter.

"This is such a wonderful thing," said Burley Phelan, executive director of the Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission. "It's something we've been working on for a long time, and there have been so many people involved.

"I'm really glad it's here, though," he added. "As much as I'm excited about it, it was a lot of pressure."

Johnny Depp, perhaps Owensboro's most famous native son, failed to make the event as many had hoped. The actor, known for movies including "Edward Scissorhands" and "Ed Wood," was born here in 1963.

"I never really did get an answer from his agent," Phelan said a little disappointedly. "But he just got back from France on Monday and he's starting a new movie."

Florence Henderson, the Brady Bunch mom who attended high school here, sent high-school chum Ruth Helen Wright to accept the plaque, which has a rendering of the city of Owensboro superimposed over a star.

"I swear, it means more than an academy award," said Jody Berry, 63, standing next to a publicity photo of himself as a young entertainer, hair swept back in a pompadour and a scarf tied fashionably around his neck. "If you leave a mark in your hometown, it's the only thing that matters."

Berry and his wife, Joni, now live in Beverly Hills and visit Owensboro every couple of years, Joni Berry said. Before hosting a Thanksgiving dinner for 74 at the Executive Inn last week, the couple last visited Owensboro to celebrate Jody Berry's 60th birthday, she said.

Nineteen of the 38 original inductees confirmed attendance at the event. Another 13 assigned a family member or other representative to attend, Phelan said.

Phelan said some celebrities planned to attend only the dinner and induction ceremony. Among those attending the reception were Cliff Hagan, W.L. Johnson, Bobby Rascoe, Deangelo and Joyce Robinson (representing football player Vince Buck), Patrick Johnson, Bill Sterrett Jr. (representing his late father, a professional raceboat driver) and David Watkins.

Plaques will be sent to those who didn't attend the event, an idea tourist commission Chairman Terry Woodward began to dream of more than 10 years ago.

Mark Higgs, a 33-year-old who retired from professional football in 1995 and now operates a transportation company for the elderly and handicapped in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., said he comes home several times a year to visit his 17-year-old daughter, a cheerleader at Owensboro High School.

"It's an honor to be here with some of the local greats," said Higgs, plucking the last hors d'oeuvre from the small paper plate in his hand. "I hadn't seen Cliff Hagan since college, when he was athletic director."

Higgs, a 1984 graduate of Owensboro High School, played football for the University of Kentucky before a career in which he played for four professional teams: The Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Eagles, Miami Dolphins and Arizona Cardinals.

Former Kentucky governor and retired U.S. Sen. Wendell Ford, who just weeks ago helped dedicate the Wendell H. Ford Government Education Center at the Owensboro Area Museum of Science, said the Hall of Fame induction is just as meaningful.

"I think there's an old saying that being recognized in your hometown is probably the biggest compliment a person can receive," he said. "The people of Owensboro and Daviess County gave me a rare opportunity."

These 37 people and one horse were inducted into the Owensboro-Daviess County Tourist Commission's Hall of Fame at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Sportscenter:

Mack Allison, baseball.  
Jody Berry, entertainer-philanthropist.  
Terry Bisson, author.  
Chris Brown, football.  
Vince Buck, football.  
Rex Chapman, basketball.  
Wayne Chapman, basketball.  
Stephen Cohen, professor-author-TV commentator.  
Johnny Depp, actor.  
Tom Ewell, actor.  
Wendell Ford, governor-U.S. senator.  
David Green, NASCAR.  
Jeff Green, NASCAR.  
Mark Green, NASCAR.  
Cliff Hagan, basketball.  
Florence Henderson, actress-entertainer.  
Kenny Higgs, basketball.  
Mark Higgs, football.  
Patrick Johnson, jockey.  
W.L. Johnson, jockey.  
Jeremy Mayfield, NASCAR.

Jim McCormick, powerboat driver.  
John Dewey "Jughandle Johnny" Morrison, baseball.  
Eugene Oberst, Olympic medal winner.  
Bobby Rascoe, basketball.  
Moneta Sleet Jr., Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer.  
Christine Johnson Smith, Metropolitan Opera-Broadway singer.  
Spend A Buck, Kentucky Derby winner.  
Bill Sterett Sr., powerboat driver.  
"Hump" Tanner, football.  
Zach Terrell, circus owner.  
Larry Vanover, National League umpire.  
Nick Varner, world champion billiards player.  
Darrell Waltrip, NASCAR.  
Michael Waltrip, NASCAR.  
David Watkins, baseball.  
Bobby Watson, basketball.  
Kenny Willis, football.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 25 October 2008, p.1B:**

Henderson to perform at RiverPark `All the Lives of Me'  
to benefit center, OSO, Brescia University

By Beth Wilberding, Messenger-Inquirer

Florence Henderson stood near the front of the RiverPark Center stage Friday afternoon, microphone in hand, singing one of the numbers from her one-woman show.

"Now that I'm up here, under the lights, within your gaze, I hear those little questions ...," she sang strongly.

But barely a verse into the song, which included lyrics about questions she gets regarding plastic surgery, she stopped her musicians. Henderson said she was too far from them, asking that they move closer when they had the chance, before continuing with her song and stories.

Henderson was rehearsing for tonight's performance of "All the Lives of Me," a show she wrote. It is the Owensboro premiere of her show, which she has also presented in New York City.

Comedienne Mrs. Hughes, who is described on her Web site as being "America's funniest grandma," will perform with Henderson tonight.

"This audience will just love her," Henderson said.

Henderson portrayed one of the best-known moms in television history - Carol Brady on "The Brady Bunch."

More recently, she has guest starred on VH1's "The Surreal Life" and hosted "The Florence Henderson Show" on Retirement Living TV.

She also starred in "Ladies of the House," a television movie that aired on the Hallmark Channel on Oct. 18, with Donna Mills and Pam Grier.

Henderson was born in Dale, Ind. She attended high school at St. Frances Academy in Owensboro and said she took a Greyhound bus to school each day from Rockport, Ind.

She performed with the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra at the opening of the RiverPark Center in 1992, and she has an honorary doctorate from Brescia University. Henderson has also performed at the Executive Inn Rivermont.

Ticket sales from tonight's show, which is sponsored by Owensboro Grain, will benefit the symphony, Brescia and RiverPark Center.

Henderson was extremely complimentary of the RiverPark Center, adding that her musicians were also impressed with the facility. She said she has been in bigger theaters that aren't as nice as Cannon Hall.

"I don't know if the people here appreciate (the RiverPark Center)," Henderson said. "They really need to support it."

Henderson said she will have friends and family attending tonight's performance, and it is going to be the first opportunity for her siblings to see "All the Lives of Me."

"I talk a lot about Owensboro and my upbringing," she said. "It's incredibly exciting (and) a little nerve-wracking."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 24 March 2011, p.1A:**

\$25,000 more needed to buy Goldie's

By Beth Wilberding, Messenger-Inquirer

Theatre Workshop of Owensboro is just \$25,000 from raising the funds needed to purchase The Opryhouse, formerly Goldie's Best Little Opryhouse in Kentucky.

It has about a week to meet that final goal.



The community theater is actually \$50,000 short of the \$250,000 asking price on the venue, but a local foundation said it will contribute \$25,000 toward the campaign if TWO is able to match the other \$25,000 by April 1, TWO's executive director Stephen Coppick said.

The foundation wants to remain anonymous, he said.

TWO entered into an 18-month lease with an option to purchase the opryhouse with owners Goldie and Charlie Payne in October 2009. TWO has until April 30 to complete the purchase with the Paynes, but Coppick is supposed to let them know at the beginning of the month if TWO plans to buy it.

The majority of contributors to TWO's campaign to purchase The Opryhouse have been individuals, though some companies and foundations have made donations, Coppick said. One famous contributor is television star Florence Henderson, who was born in Dale, Ind., and attended high school in Owensboro.

Henderson wrote in a letter included with the donation that she has fond memories of the Malco movie theater. The Opryhouse opened as the Empress movie theater in 1912 before becoming the Malco.

"I was inspired by many movies I saw there," she wrote.

So far, the organization has raised \$200,000 in cash to purchase the facility, including \$50,000 it paid when it signed the lease. TWO will not go into debt to purchase the facility, Coppick said. The facility recently received its audit for last year, and it finished 2010 in the black, he said.

TWO wants to continue producing plays, concerts and other events at The Opryhouse. The community theater presented "A Christmas Carol" in December, and the show was seen by nearly 1,400 residents over several shows, Coppick said.

It hosted a concert series in 2010-11 that included a sold out performance by Leon Redbone on Jan. 28. That same evening, TWO presented a sold out stage production of "The Real Inspector Hound" at the Trinity Centre, TWO's longtime home on Fifth Street.

TWO sold 370 tickets for Redbone and 95 for "Inspector Hound."

"We feel like we'll manage it well," Coppick said. "We're in a growing phase."

Coppick gives tours of The Opryhouse to residents interested in learning more about, and potentially donating to, the project. TWO is in the midst of a capitol campaign, and if it is able to purchase The Opryhouse, officials will begin fundraising for renovations.

A stage production of "A Few Good Men" continues this weekend at The Opryhouse, and TWO has plans to present the musical "Gypsy," starring Goldie Payne, at the venue this summer.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 4 June 2014, p.1B:**

Names & Notes: TV's Mrs. Brady happy to shop local

By Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer

Long before Natasha Gaw was born, Florence Henderson was starring in the ABC sitcom "The Brady Bunch," but Gaw recognized the actress when she stopped in her store, Bella Ragazza, last week. The comedy ran from 1967 to 1974 and has been in reruns for decades.

Henderson's sister, Emily Miller, who lives in Rhode Island, came to Bella Ragazza's grand opening last May and had bought some things, Gaw said. Henderson, Miller and another sister, who lives in Dale, Indiana, stayed almost an hour at the dress shop, Gaw said.



Florence Henderson stands between Bella Ragazza Boutique's manager-buyer Natasha Gaw, right, and Jennifer Blair while Henderson was shopping at the downtown boutique last week. Henderson has ties with Owensboro and southern Indiana. She is best known for her role as Carol Brady on the ABC sitcom "The Brady Bunch."

Henderson, 80, has ties with Owensboro and southern Indiana. She was born in Dale, the last of 10 children, and is a graduate of St. Frances Academy in Owensboro. According to accounts published in the Messenger-Inquirer, she traveled to St. Frances daily from Rockport, Indiana, a city that also claims the television and stage actress. The academy closed in 1951.

"They were a lot of fun," Gaw said.

She was down to earth and didn't expect special treatment, Gaw said. "There were other people in the store, and she didn't want to draw attention to herself."

Henderson is most known for her role as Carol Brady, the mother of a blended family of three boys and three girls. The father, Mike Brady was played by the late Robert Reed. And Alice, the housekeeper, played by Ann B. Davis, died Sunday.

The sisters and a niece had been to the riverfront and were having a good time, Gaw said.

Gaw's hoping another actor with ties to Owensboro will stop in her shop one day.

"I'd love to see Johnny Depp," Gaw said.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 21 November 2015, p.1A:**



Makayla Bratcher, 13, gets a hug while taking a photo Friday with actress Florence Henderson as Shelly Smith, 13, looks on from left during a plaque unveiling for Owensboro's Walk of Fame at the Owensboro Convention Center. Henderson and Broadway actress Christine Johnson Smith were honored with the plaques during the ceremony, which is organized by the Walk of Fame Advisory Board and celebrates famous Owensboro natives. Henderson is set to serve as grand marshal for the 79th annual Owensboro Christmas Parade on Saturday, Nov. 21.

## Co-grand marshal to see parade for first time

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

When Florence Henderson rides down Second Street in a carriage at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, as co-grand marshal (with reality TV star Carson Kressley) of the 79th annual Owensboro-Daviess County Christmas Parade, it will be the first time she's seen the parade.

Even though she grew up in Rockport, Indiana, nine miles away, and was only 3 years old when the parade began in 1937, she never saw it as a child.

"I'm shocked," Henderson, 81, said Friday during a visit to the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art. "When I saw how old the parade is, I couldn't believe I had never seen it. I guess nobody told me about it."

She's still busy making movies 45 years after her film debut in "Song of Norway."

"I was in St. Louis this summer, making two movies," Henderson said. "And St. Louis in the summer is like Owensboro in the summer. Hot."

"Grandmothers Murder Club" is about four women of a certain age who kill people. "They deserve it," Henderson said.

"Fifty Shades of Black" is a comedy with Marlon Wayans.

And Henderson is getting in shape for a "Dancing With The Stars" cruise in 2016.

There was a time when Owensboro was the city in Henderson's life.

That was more than 60 years ago, when a teenage girl caught a passenger bus near her home in Rockport, before dawn each morning, so she could come to Owensboro as a student at St. Frances Academy.

"Owensboro was just the turning point in my life," the singer-actress said in a previous interview.

"I had heard about St. Frances' music program, and I wanted to attend," Henderson said. "A friend and I rode a bus to Owensboro every day. The tuition must have been very small, but it must have been a lot for my parents."

### Youngest of 10

She was the youngest of 10 children of Joseph and Elizabeth Elder Henderson, sharecroppers who moved several times in western Kentucky and southern Indiana.

"Eight of my brothers and sisters were born in Kentucky around Owensboro," Henderson said.

She was born in Dale, Indiana, on Feb. 14, 1934, and grew up in Rockport.

In September 1992, 40 years after her Broadway debut, Henderson headlined the grand opening of Owensboro's RiverPark Center.

Her first Owensboro homecoming was in October 1964, when she performed at the Sportscenter with Skitch Henderson, then the "Tonight Show" band leader, and singer Bill Hayes to benefit a Brescia College voice scholarship established in her name in 1963.

Brescia honored her with a Florence Henderson Day in 1964 and again in 1980.

She appeared for a week at the Executive Inn Rivermont in 1980 and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Brescia that week.

Henderson plugged Owensboro on national television many times through the years, mentioning it on the old Nashville Network, where she had a cooking show for nearly a decade, and even working it into the scripts of several episodes of "The Brady Bunch," the series that made her name a household word.

Her mother taught her to sing and claimed Henderson knew 50 songs by age 2. But it was at St. Frances, in the 500 block of Allen Street, that she began developing into an entertainer.

### Started Singing In Choir

"I really started singing in the choir in school," Henderson said. "They gave me more solo work as they learned I could sing. Then I sang with a country band and really anyone who would ask me."

One of the musical groups she joined was the Clayton Spurlock Orchestra, a well-known area band in those years.

Henderson won the title role in her high school operetta, "Jerry of Jericho Road." And she dreamed of her big break when Horace Heidt, a radio talent scout, brought his show to the Sportscenter.

"They said we could audition at WOMI," Henderson said in an earlier interview. "Jane Powell was my favorite person in the world. I went to all her movies. I didn't know how to audition, so I took one of her records along — 'It's A Most Unusual Day.' It was in the wrong key for me, but I didn't care."

She said, "They asked if I had music. I said, 'No, but I have a record I can sing along with.' So that's what I did."

But Henderson didn't make the cut for Heidt's show.

"My sister wrote a letter and sent it backstage, telling him he had picked the wrong person because her sister was going to be a big star," she said, laughing at the memory.

Henderson told that story on television once and received a letter from the woman who won that contest.

A high school friend, Ruth Helen O'Bryan Wright, was concerned that Henderson would never get a chance to develop her talent.

"She was my first big supporter," Henderson said Friday.

### Smith Was First Mentor

"She asked her family to hear me sing and help me get to New York," Henderson said. "They thought I had a terrific voice and took me to Christine Johnson Smith," a former Metropolitan Opera mezzo-contralto and Broadway performer who had settled in Owensboro.

On Friday afternoon, Henderson and Smith, who died in 2010, were inducted into Owensboro's Walk of Fame.

Being inducted with Smith was special, Henderson said.

"She thought I had talent," Henderson said, "and agreed to coach me in voice. She took me under her wing. She said, 'This child deserves a break'."

Henderson said, "You never know what life will bring. But because of her, it all fell into place a lot faster."

That was 1951 — about four months after Henderson graduated from St. Frances.

"You grow up not seeing a building over two stories tall and then go to New York with all the skyscrapers," Henderson said. "It was a big change for a 17-year-old girl from Owensboro. It took me a couple of weeks to have the courage to look up at the buildings."

She enrolled at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, a two-year program.

"At the end of the first year, I went to an audition," Henderson said. "Everyone else had been, and no one had gotten a job. They told me to try. Someone loaned me some music and a swimsuit."

After she had auditioned, they asked her to model the swimsuit.

"Of course, it didn't fit at all," she said.

A stagehand found some safety pins, and she tried to pin the suit together.

It turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Josh Logan, one of Broadway's leading directors, got a big laugh. And when Henderson was called back for an audition, he remembered her.

She landed a one-line role in "Wish You Were Here" and never stopped working.

Then came a role in the national touring company of "Oklahoma!"

Her father died the day before it opened. There was no understudy, so the show went on.

Later, when Hollywood filmed "Oklahoma!," Shirley Jones got the Henderson role.

Henderson's big break came in the title role in the Broadway production of "Fanny" in 1955.

She moved to television in 1958, appearing on "TV Sing Along," and then "The Today Show" in 1959-60.

Henderson returned to the stage in 1967, appearing in a revival of "South Pacific."

### 'Here's The Story ...'

But it was a sitcom in 1969 that gave her her most enduring role.

Reruns of "The Brady Bunch," which left the air in 1975, have been seen in more than 130 countries. And they're still airing in 122, she said.

"I think I get more fan mail today than I got when it was on the air," Henderson said Friday. "I get it from Russia, Poland, China and India these days. And I answer it all. My website gets a lot of comments from children in Owensboro who have just discovered it."

The show remains popular because it represents the family "everybody wishes they had," she said. "You can't kill it with a stick."

Some say more people know the words to "The Brady Bunch" theme than know the words to the national anthem.

Henderson said she gets back to the area once a year to visit family and friends.

"I've heard about what they've done downtown," she said. "I'm anxious to see it."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 2 December 2015, p.2D:**



Florence Henderson, star of stage and screen, is interviewed at the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art by Messenger-Inquirer reporter Keith Lawrence on Nov. 21. Henderson was in Owensboro to serve as grand marshal of the Christmas Parade.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 26 November 2016, p.1A:**

Beloved TV mom Henderson dies  
She appreciated role area played in her stardom

By Lynn Elber, AP Television Writer & Don Wilkins, Messenger-Inquirer



Florence Henderson poses for a photograph at an event  
Nov. 20, 2015, at the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art

LOS ANGELES – Florence Henderson, who went from Broadway star to become one of America's most beloved television moms in "The Brady Bunch," has died. She was 82.

Henderson died at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles on Thursday night, a day after she was hospitalized, said her publicist, David Brokaw. Henderson had suffered heart failure, her manager Kayla Pressman said in a statement.

Family and friends had surrounded Henderson's hospital bedside, Pressman said.

On the surface, "The Brady Bunch" with Henderson as its ever-cheerful matriarch Carol Brady resembled just another TV sitcom about a family living in suburban America and getting into a different wacky situation each week.

But well after it ended its initial run in 1974, the show resonated with audiences, and it returned to television in various forms again and again, including "The Brady Bunch Hour" in 1977, "The Brady Brides" in 1981 and "The Bradys" in 1990. It was also seen endlessly in reruns.

"It represents what people always wanted: a loving family. It's such a gentle, innocent, sweet show, and I guess it proved there's always an audience for that," Henderson said in 1999.

Premiering in 1969, it also was among the first shows to introduce to television the blended family. As its theme song reminded viewers each week, Henderson's Carol was a single mother raising three daughters when she met her TV husband, Robert Reed's Mike Brady, a single father who was raising three boys.

The eight of them became "The Brady Bunch," with a quirky housekeeper, played by Ann B. Davis, thrown into the mix.

Mourners flooded social media with memories of Henderson.

Maureen McCormick, who played the eldest Brady daughter, Marcia, tweeted, "You are in my heart forever Florence." "Dancing With the Stars" host Tom Bergeron tweeted, "Heartbroken. I'll miss you, my friend." Henderson's last public appearance was Monday at the "Dancing With the Stars" taping where she was in the audience to support McCormick, who competed this season.

The blond, ever-smiling Henderson was already a Broadway star when the show began, having originated the title role in the musical "Fanny." But after "The Brady Bunch," she would always be known to fans as Carol Brady.

"We had to have security guards with us. Fans were hanging on our doors. We couldn't go out by ourselves. We were like the Beatles!" she said of the attention the show brought the cast.

Henderson also had a close connection to Owensboro.

In an interview last year with the Messenger-Inquirer, Henderson said she rode a bus from Rockport, Indiana, to Owensboro every day to attend St. Frances Academy.

"... Owensboro was just the turning point in my life," Henderson said. "... I had heard about St. Frances' music program, and I wanted to attend."

A Dale, Indiana, native, she graduated in 1951 from St. Frances Academy.

Over the years, she returned to Owensboro for various appearances, including her headlining of the grand opening of the RiverPark Center in September 1992.

Last November, she was on hand for her induction into the Owensboro Walk of Fame. She was also the co-grand marshal of the 79th annual Owensboro Christmas Parade.

"I just can't believe what Owensboro has become," said Henderson in her induction speech. It all began for me here, and I will never forget that."

Henderson was a 19-year-old drama student in New York when she landed a one-line role in the play "Wish You Were Here."

Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were so impressed they made her the female lead in a 1952 road tour of "Oklahoma!" When the show returned to Broadway for a revival in 1954, she continued in the role and won rave reviews.

"She is the real thing," wrote Walter Kerr of the New York Herald Tribune.

To broaden her career, Henderson took acting, dancing, singing and guitar lessons, even studying French and Italian.

Henderson went on to play the lead Maria in a road production of "The Sound of Music," was Nellie Forbush in a revival of "South Pacific" and was back on Broadway with Jose Ferrer in "The Girl Who Came to Supper" in 1963.

She made her movie debut in 1970 in "Song of Norway," based on the 1944 operetta with music by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg.

Her career nearly came to an end in 1965 when she suddenly lost her hearing while appearing in "The King and I" in Los Angeles. She was diagnosed with a condition linked to heredity.

"Corrective surgery in both ears restored my hearing," she said in 2007.

As her TV career blossomed with "The Brady Bunch," Henderson also began to make frequent TV guest appearances.

She was the first woman to host "The Tonight Show" for the vacationing Johnny Carson.

For eight years she also commuted to Nashville to conduct a cooking and talk series, "Country Kitchen," on The Nashville Network.

The show resulted in a book, "Florence Henderson's Short Cut Cooking."

After "The Brady Bunch" ended its first run, Henderson alternated her appearances in revivals of the show with guest appearances on other programs, including "Hart to Hart," "Fantasy Island" and "The Love Boat."

In later years she also made guest appearances on such shows as "Roseanne," "Ally McBeal" and "The King of Queens."

She also became a commercial spokeswoman and co-produced "Country Kitchen," The Los Angeles Times reported.





**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 1 December 2016, p.1B:**

Henderson never forgot her roots

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

She was indeed a lovely lady, as the song lyrics said.  
And very gracious.  
I had the privilege of interviewing Florence Henderson three or four times through the years.

And she was always very friendly and warm.  
She never forgot where she came from.  
Or the people who had helped her when she needed help in those long-ago days.  
When she died on Thanksgiving Day, I thought how glad I was that Owensboro finally got the chance to honor her last year.

She was grand marshal of the 2015 Christmas parade.  
And the city unveiled her plaque in the Walk of Fame.  
It was supposed to have happened the year before.  
But for some reason, things just didn't work out.  
I'm glad it all came together last year.  
Henderson was born in Dale, Indiana, and grew up in Rockport, Indiana.  
But Owensboro was the city in her young life.  
She always remembered catching a passenger bus near her home in Rockport, before dawn each morning, so she could come to Owensboro as a student at St. Frances Academy.

"Owensboro was just the turning point in my life," she said once.  
And she never forgot us.

In September 1992, 40 years after her Broadway debut, Henderson headlined the grand opening of Owensboro's RiverPark Center.

Her first Owensboro homecoming was in October 1964, when she performed at the Sportscenter with Skitch Henderson, then the "Tonight Show" band leader, and singer Bill Hayes to benefit a Brescia College voice scholarship established in her name in 1963.

Brescia honored her with a Florence Henderson Day in 1964 and again in 1980.

She appeared for a week at the Executive Inn Rivermont in 1980 and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Brescia that week.

Henderson plugged Owensboro on national television many times through the years, even working it into the scripts of several episodes of "The Brady Bunch," the series that made her name a household word.

She was once called "the world's favorite Mom."

"Brady Bunch" reruns are probably airing somewhere in the world today.

The lesson here is don't wait to honor the special people in your life.

You never know how much time you'll have with them.





**Westwood Memorial Park Cemetery  
Westwood, Los Angeles County, California**



See also:

- Owensboro Messenger – 1953: 4/26 p.2B (“Former Student Here Becomes Overnight Success As Singing Star of ‘Oklahoma’”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1953: 10/18 p.3A (“Florence Henderson Back In Laurey Role In Guild’s 11th Year Revival of ‘Oklahoma!’”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1954: 8/17 p.5A (“Florence Henderson Making Success on Musical Stage”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1954: 9/5 p.9D (“Florence Henderson Rehearsing For ‘Fanny,’ Considered Luckiest Young Girl On Broadway”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1954: 9/19 p.12D (“Life Picture Story Features Florence Henderson Back Home”)
- Owensboro Messenger – 1954: 11/5 p.1A (“Florence Henderson, New Prima Donna of Broadway, Wins Acclaim in ‘Fanny’”)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1955: 3/27 p.6A (leading lady of ‘Fanny’, Broadway hit show, will be guest on Ed Sullivan’s ‘Toast of the Town’)

- Messenger-Inquirer – 1956: 7/15 p.2D (“Owensboro, Rockport’s Florence Henderson Will Assume New Role Armistice Day”)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1964: 10/6 p.1B (“Florence Henderson Tells Her Life Story”), see also 1964: 10/7 p.1B , 1964: 10/8 p.1B, 1964: 10/9 p.2A
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1964: 10/19 p.1A (“Florence Gets Warm Welcome At Airport From Friends, Fans”) and 1964: 10/20 p.3B (“Florence’s Homecoming A Big Day For Owensboroans”)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1980: 4/1 p.1B ("Florence comes back for a visit")
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1980: 4/3 p.1D ("Dr. Flo: Florence Henderson honored with doctorate from Brescia")
- Owensboro Star – 1968: 7/31 p.1 (“ Calls Florence Henderson”)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 1983: 5/19 p.1C & 2C ("Actress' mother Dies", Mrs. Elizabeth P. Mosbacher, mother of Florence Henderson, dies)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 2015: 8/15 p.1A ("Henderson to head Christmas parade", Television and stage actress, singer and entertainer Florence Henderson, 81, who starred as Carol Brady on the ABC sitcom "The Brady Bunch" from 1969 to 1974, will be the grand marshal of the 2015 Owensboro Christmas Parade on Nov 21; native of Dale, Indiana, who graduated from St. Frances Academy in Owensboro, is a member of the inaugural class of the Owensboro Hall of Fame; often referred to as "America's favorite TV mom," established ties to Owensboro by traveling by bus from Rockport, IN, to attend high school at St. Francis Academy, which closed in 1951; the last of 10 children, is most known for her role as Carol Brady, she has returned to Owensboro several times through the years, she joined the late John Denver as the headliners for the grand opening of the River Park Center on 12 September 1992, she returned to the Cannon Hall stage in October 2008 to perform "All the Lives of Me," a show she wrote and presented in New York City; when she was 18 and just a year out of high school, she got her big break when she was cast as Laurey, the female lead, in the 1952 road show version of the musical "Oklahoma!"; a dozen years later Henderson was back in Owensboro, on 20 October 1964, performing a concert in front of 5,500 people at the Sportscenter, she was joined that night by Bill Hayes & Skitch Henderson; she has an honorary doctorate from Brescia University; she also performed at the Executive Inn Rivermont)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 2015: 11/10 p.1 ("Henderson headlining 79th Christmas parade", on November 21, while in Owensboro she will be inducted into the Owensboro Walk of Fame on November 20 in ceremony at the Owensboro Convention Center lobby)
- Messenger-Inquirer – 2015: 11/20 p.1B ("Kressley 'thrilled' to join Henderson for Christmas Parade")
- Messenger-Inquirer – 2015: 11/22 p.1A ("Chilly & Cherry: Thousands turn out for Christmas Parade")
- There were numerous other articles about Florence Henderson that were published in the Owensboro newspapers.

