



**Mary
O'Connell**
Other

Mary O'Connell

Mar 24, 1925 - Jan 18, 2012

BIRTHPLACE: Atkinson, NE

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Cadet Student Nurse (CSN)

DIVISION: Other, Cadet Nurse Corps in 1944

THEATER OF OPERATION: American

HONORED BY: Doyle and Maureen (Hoffmann)
Comfort

BIOGRAPHY

Mary J. (O'Connell) Hoffmann: March 24, 1925 to January 18, 2012 Mary J. O'Connell was the daughter of Daniel James O'Connell (December 22, 1882 to November 11, 1969) and Jessie Lenore (McCarthy) O'Connell (April 25, 1893 to October 25, 1977). She was born and raised in Atkinson, NE, and had a twin brother, Joseph, who died in infancy. She graduated from the St Joseph Academy High School in Atkinson and from Creighton University School of Nursing Program in June of 1947 in Omaha, NE. After her high school graduation, Mary worked as a telephone operator before deciding to join the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps in 1944. As a Cadet Student Nurse (CSN) she trained for three years at St Joseph's Hospital in Omaha, NE (affiliated with Creighton University) under the direction of the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph who operated the hospital. Her commitment was that she would serve as a nurse in the Army until the end of World War II. When Mary graduated in June of 1947, the war was over and she was released from her obligation, free to work in a place of her choosing. As part of the War Effort, the United States Cadet Nurse Corps for Women was authorized by the U.S. Congress on June 15, 1943, and signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on July 01, 1943, running until 1948. Successful applicants were eligible for a government subsidy that paid for tuition, books, uniforms, and a stipend to accredited nursing programs, for young women between the ages of 17 to 35. (Nebraska had eight such programs.) In exchange, Cadet Student Nurses were required to pledge to serve in the military, essential civilian or federal government services, including civilian hospitals, public health clinics, and Indian health service, for the duration of World War II. The pledge was a statement of good intentions rather than a legal contract. Nearly 120,000 women served in the Cadet Nurse Corps program during the war. They are one of the few uniformed service members from WWII who do not have veteran status. Mary's cadet nursing class stayed in touch for many years following graduation. Included is an article from the "Omaha World-Herald" dated September 13, 2007, highlighting her 60th class reunion. Mary was not in attendance. Josephine "Joe" (Hoffmann) James (pictured in the article) was one of her classmates and the sister of Clem Hoffmann, her future husband. Mary O'Connell and Clem Hoffmann (WWII veteran) were married on November 08, 1950

in Atkinson, NE. They established their home in Norfolk, NE, having previously lived a short time in Kearney and Grand Island, NE. In Norfolk, Mary worked at Our Lady of Lord's Hospital. They then moved to Falls City in 1965 where Clem purchased the Herb Bailey Insurance Agency. In 1971 Mary was employed at the Falls City Community Medical Center where she worked until retiring in 1992. Their six children attended Sacred Heart Grade School and High School. Daniel Hoffmann, born 1951; deceased 2008 Patrick Hoffmann, born 1952 Stephen Hoffmann, born 1954 Annette (Hoffmann) Bramhall, born 1956 Maureen (Hoffmann) Comfort, born 1957 Ronald Hoffmann, born 1965 Three of their children served in the military: Patrick Hoffmann, US Army Maureen Comfort, US Army Ronald Hoffmann, US Navy Additional information about my mother: Mary remembered how strict the sisters at St Joseph's Hospital were but always respected her training through them. Mary's father, Daniel O'Connell (1892-1969), was of Irish ancestry, born in a log cabin near Atkinson, NE. The cabin is currently in a museum in Stuart, NE. He served during WWI as a Sergeant in trench warfare in France. He contracted the Spanish flu and was ill in France. The virus was first documented at Camp Funston in Ft Riley, KS, infecting 50,000 Soldiers at the fort and traveling across the country and overseas. Mary's mother, Jessie (McCarthy) O'Connell (1893-1977), was of Irish ancestry, raised with four siblings on a ranch in a sod house on the prairie in Keystone, Nebraska. Jessie's mother, Roseanna (McGinley) McCarthy (1858-1933), as a single 28-year-old lady in 1886, traveled by a mule-drawn wagon with her 15-year-old brother, George Patrick McGinley (1871-1954), from eastern Nebraska to western Nebraska to homestead. George Patrick McGinley later became a prominent rancher, along with four of his sons, in the Keystone, Ogallala, and Valentine areas. I have been told that 20,000 acres (in Cherry County and Brown County) of one of the ranches became part of the Niobrara State Park. Ted Turner presently owns an 80,000-acre former "McGinley Ranch" that straddles the border of northern Nebraska and southern South Dakota. Donald Francis McGinley (1920 – 2005), son of George Patrick McGinley, was a WWII U.S. Army Air Force Veteran, U.S. House Representative in 1959-1960, a state Senator in 1963 – 1965, and Lt. Governor in 1983-1987 serving under Governor Bob Kerry. Pulitzer Prize winner, poet, and writer, Phyllis McGinley (1905-1978) is a relative. Her grandfather, Dan McGinley, was a brother to Mary's great-grandfather, John McGinley. Written on October 28, 2024 by: COL Maureen M. (Hoffmann) Comfort, ANC, USA, Retired