

# WOMEN

Who Helped Shape

# OUR TOWN



BY **Mike Leonard** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **Shannon Zahnle**

**W**HEN MARY ALICE DUNLAP WAS APPOINTED BY THE BLOOMINGTON CITY COUNCIL AS THE CITY'S FIRST WOMAN MAYOR IN 1962 after the resignation of fellow Democrat Tom Lemon, it provided a cause for celebration. The former city clerk/treasurer was just the second woman ever to serve as the mayor of an Indiana city, but the breakthrough was short-lived. Dunlap narrowly lost to Republican John Hooker in the November 1963 election and Bloomington and Monroe County returned to default mode with men holding all of the highest elective offices.

But just as change became a national motto in the latter half of the 1960s, it

arrived full blown in Bloomington with the dawn of the '70s. In the 1971 elections, Democrats flipped the 8-1 Republican majority on the City Council to 8-1 Democratic. Charlotte Zietlow won election to the council and became its president from 1972-73. Very quickly, women started filling positions previously the province of men, and it happened not through revolution but evolution, says Indiana University political science Professor Marjorie Hershey.

"When you're talking about major changes like this, a whole lot of things have to prepare the way," she says. "It was the constellation of a lot of major changes in our lives that led to greatly increasing people's questioning about the way we had structured our public life in the past. So many things are

intertwined — the development of effective birth control for women allowed them to move out of their homes with more predictability and explore their own interests and commitments to a greater extent. And once that happened, more men were able to get ideas from women and see that there was, obviously, at least an equal amount of talent that had been overlooked."

Zietlow credits then-Monroe County Democratic Party Chairman Ed Treacy for persuading her to run for elective office, and Treacy recalls that it took "some salesmanship." He wasn't on a quest to get women more involved in politics, he acknowledges. "I was just looking for the best candidates."

Treacy, who recently stepped down after a decade at the helm of the Marion County (Indianapolis) Democratic Party, believes the rise of women in politics was inevitable.

"Men were at the forefront, but I can tell you that the women were the ones who did

all the busy grunt work. I can tell you that if you want someone to really complete a job in this business, you can depend on the women more often than not to complete the job and do the nitty-gritty stuff that needs to be done," he says.

"Of course Bloomington was a special place, a very active place," the longtime political operative says. "I can remember articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* about Bloomington and Madison, Wisconsin, being on the cutting edge." Treacy says those articles mentioned that women in both cities were being elected to offices previously held only by men.

While college towns generally are more open and inclusive, says Hershey, "not all college towns are as active as Bloomington and not all college towns have the benefit of the tremendous energy and the talents of the people we're talking about here. The women who had that kind of drive in the early '70s — Charlotte, Marilyn (Schultz), and Tomi (Allison) — they had very special characteristics. Obviously, Charlotte and Marilyn were entrepreneurs and being entrepreneurial

is a very helpful quality in community leadership."

Enormous changes were occurring on the Indiana University campus as well. Advisors stopped steering away from sending women into traditional fields such as teaching and nursing, and male faculty members stopped rolling their eyes at women who came up for tenure, instead seeing them as assets to their schools and departments.

"There is always this big debate in history: Is it the times that bring out the people or is it the people who bring out the times?" Hershey says. "My feeling is you can't have one without the other. In this community, I think we clearly had both women who were ready to lead and a community that was accepting of their leadership."

*Bloom* spoke with numerous community leaders to identify women who helped shape Bloomington into the city it is today. We selected 10 for this article, but there are many more women who contributed in ways both large and small.

(opposite page, l-r) Vi Taliaferro, Charlotte Zietlow, and Marilyn Schultz (Courtesy photo).

(clockwise from top left) Sue Talbot, Elizabeth Bridgwaters, Tomi Allison, Vi Simpson, Gayle Cook, Joyce Poling, and Rosemary Miller (Courtesy photo).



# VI SIMPSON

As Monroe County auditor, **Vi Simpson** helped in the push to restore the courthouse, build the Charlotte T. Zietlow Justice Center, reorganize the county landfill, and computerize voter registration and other county records. She then served as a fierce advocate for public and higher education during seven terms in the Indiana Senate.

Whether the Monroe County Courthouse should be demolished or saved was a contentious enough issue in the early 1980s that someone who considered the 1907 Beaux Arts-style courthouse to be a firetrap informed the state fire marshal, who demanded a no-nonsense meeting with the local powers-that-be.

As county auditor, Vi Simpson called together the principal parties — herself; Charlotte Zietlow, the president of the County Commissioners; Christine McPatridge, the county highway engineer; and Elizabeth Mann, the county attorney.

“When the fire marshal showed up, he looked around and said, ‘Where are the people in charge?’” Simpson remembers. “He was looking at four women. And we just said, ‘You’re looking at them.’ He was completely shocked and put off.”

Bloomington and Monroe County were, Simpson remembers with a smile, a little more progressive than other places when it came to women serving in important positions.

A California native, Simpson started her career as a newspaper reporter in the San Francisco Bay Area. She then served on the California Commission on the Status of Women and on the staff of Secretary of State

*“We pretty much changed how everything worked at the courthouse, and as a result, we weren’t very popular.”*

and future Gov. Jerry Brown. Then, she says, “I got a divorce and moved with my two babies to Indiana.” She landed in Ellettsville in 1978 because she heard the schools were good, and she put down roots.

Bloomington Mayor Frank McCloskey asked her to run for Monroe County auditor, and it was her good fortune, she says, to have moved into the position in the same 1980 election that Charlotte Zietlow joined the County Commissioners. “We pretty much changed how everything worked at the courthouse and, as a result, we weren’t very



popular,” she says. “I ran the landfill for the first couple of years, changed purchasing, centralized postage. We bought the first computer system for the county and started computerizing property records and voter registration,” she recalls. “It was a very exciting time for county government. There were decisions being made about the renovation or destruction of the courthouse and whether to build a new justice building. And then there was the whole situation with PCBs being discovered at the landfill,” Simpson says.

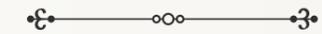
Former state Sens. Louis Mahern of Indianapolis and Frank O’Bannon of Corydon approached Simpson and asked her to run for state Senate. It helped tremendously that she was firmly planted in Republican-dominated Ellettsville and Richland Township. “I was active in school things and Little League and church and all the things that moms do,” Simpson explains. “People knew me, and I also campaigned hard there, and I won Richland Township, which was unheard of for Democrats. At one time, Democrats didn’t even bother to campaign there.”

Simpson served 28 years in the state Senate, stepping down in 2012. Her experience as a county auditor helped her to get assigned to the Senate Finance Committee, which in turn enabled her to affect education decisions, a primary interest in Bloomington; Monroe County; and at Indiana University, the largest employer in the county.

In 2003, Simpson ran unsuccessfully for governor in the Democratic primary, and in 2012 joined Democratic gubernatorial

candidate John Gregg as his running mate, again in an unsuccessful campaign. “After 28 years in the Senate, it really was time for me to step down and give somebody else the opportunity,” she says. For now, Simpson is content paying more attention to her children and grandchildren, as well as “doing things in the community I never had time to do, like the Community Foundation (of Bloomington and Monroe County) and being on the board of Sycamore Land Trust and joining the (IU Health Bloomington) hospital board,” she says.

# MARILYN SCHULTZ



As one of the first women on the Indiana House Ways and Means Committee, **Marilyn Schultz** used her financial expertise to add extra weight to special needs education, vocational studies, and half-day kindergarten. She was a businesswoman, worked for the IU School of Medicine and the Mental Health Association in Indiana, and served as state budget director.



(above) A recent photo of Marilyn Schultz. (right) Schultz at 28, when she won a seat in the Indiana House of Representatives. Courtesy photos

Marilyn Schultz was working on her doctorate in French and Spanish literature at Indiana University when she became heavily involved in the local voter’s union that gathered information on political candidates and disseminated that information as widely as possible. It was the dawn of the ‘70s and the Louisiana native immersed herself in local issues that included opposition to the Vietnam War and support for the fledgling environmental movement.

“There was a sense among young people that we could make a change if we were involved,” she says. “The slogan seemed to be if you’re not involved, you’re not making a difference.”

Schultz’s intelligence and personable approach drew the attention of local Democrats, who implored her to run for the newly created Indiana House seat that stretched from Bloomington west to Owen County. Schultz won the seat



“We were always doing our homework, making sure we had our numbers right,” Schultz says. “I think you have an obligation to be a watchdog when you’re a member of the minority.” Schultz voluntarily stepped down from the House seat she occupied from 1972–86. “If you make politics your profession, you invite

some real dangers in losing contact. In the House, you’re always running for re-election.” She went on to work for IU School of Medicine, the Mental Health Association in Indiana, served as a vice president at Indiana State University, and worked as state budget director for Democratic Govs. Frank O’Bannon and Joe Kernan.

Schultz became one of the first women ever named to the finance-focused Ways and Means Committee. “It was the beginning of a career,” she says. “From literature and education into finance and budgets, which is pretty much where I spent the rest of my career.”

A rather large sidenote to that fiscal expertise included joining the ranks of local entrepreneurs when she and Charlotte Zietlow opened Goods, Inc., a cutting-edge kitchen supply store on the downtown Square. “We entered a business community where the attitude was, ‘What do these women know?’” she says.

In the Legislature, the Bloomington Democrat chaired the subcommittee on school finance and helped write a funding formula that added extra weight to special needs education, vocational education, and half-day kindergarten. She also fought for the interests of IU, the county’s largest employer. When the Legislature flipped from Democratic to Republican control in the late ‘70s, she teamed with West Lafayette Democrat Stan Jones for regular news conferences that media members called “The Stan and Marilyn Show.” The conferences drew further attention to the Bloomington legislator.

Schultz looks back to her Bloomington days and the strides women made in society with fondness. “I think of all the incredible women involved in various issues. A stalwart organizer on the Republican side was Mary Alice Gray — such a classy woman — there wasn’t nearly the kind of party divide you see today. In 1972, it was hard for a woman to get into law school, for example. I think young women today don’t understand the pains and energy that went in to opening those doors,” she says. “Aspirations were pretty limited to the role models we knew — teachers and nurses and airline stewardesses and secretaries.

“When I think that I became a state legislator and I owned a store with another woman and I became the first woman vice president at Indiana State University and I ended my career as state budget director, it would have never occurred to me that I could have that in my life. And it all started in Bloomington, Indiana, which was and still is a very nervy community.”



Rosemary P. Miller with her husband, Delbert. Rosemary died in January 2013 at age 94. Courtesy photo

## ROSEMARY MILLER

**Rosemary Miller** was a leader in the historic restoration and preservation movement, working to save many historic buildings, including the Monroe County Courthouse. As an arts activist, she spearheaded the drive that transformed the old city hall into an arts complex, today's Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center.

Historic preservationist and developer Cynthia Brubaker once said, "No one says no to Rosemary. You can't say no to Rosemary."

Rosemary P. Miller was colorful, kind, and charismatic. But the term "force of nature" often comes up when people speak of her.

Miller died in 2013 at age 94 but left a legacy larger than life. She was a co-founder of Bloomington Restorations, Inc. (BRI) and a key player in restoring the Hinkle-Garton Farmstead that now serves as home to BRI. She was a founder of the city's Historic Preservation Commission and an important contributor to the Bloomington Area Arts Council. She worked to preserve the historic Princess Theatre; the former Carnegie Library that now houses the Monroe County History Center; and the Paris Dunning House, the home of Indiana's ninth governor.

Miller led the drive to turn Bloomington's old downtown city hall into what is now the Ivy Tech John Waldron Arts Center. The center's largest display space has been named the Rosemary P. Miller Gallery.

And then there was Miller's role in the early 1980s fight to renovate and preserve the 1907 Monroe County Courthouse, which had fallen into such disrepair that many wanted to raze the structure.

"Rosemary and Gayle Cook were running buddies on a lot of projects but the courthouse effort stands out," says Nancy Hiestand, the City of Bloomington's program manager for historic preservation. Cook recalls watching Miller, then 62, climb the scaffolding on the courthouse dome to reach the fish-shaped weather vane and wishing that she'd had the nerve to follow.

Miller was an inveterate traveler, adventurer, and painter of surprising skill, considering that she took up the craft late in life. "She was a larger-than-life character, for sure," says her daughter, Trudy McFall of Annapolis, Maryland. "I still miss my mom tremendously — that crazy Rosemary who delighted, charmed with her enthusiasm, and drove me crazy too — it leaves a real gap," she says. "But we should all be so lucky to live so long and so happily."

## Zietlow and Schultz Open Goods, Inc.

In retrospect it would be called a power lunch, with State Rep. and Ways and Means Committee Member Marilyn Schultz visiting Bloomington City Council President Charlotte Zietlow at her east-side home over omelets and a bottle of wine.

"Marilyn said, 'I get sick and tired of these guys saying you can't understand a budget until you've met a payroll,'" Zietlow recalls. "And I said, 'I have a firm grasp of the city budget, and they say the same thing to me.'"

Confident in their grasp of finances, the women decided they'd start their own business.

It was early 1973 and "this was the beginning of a true revolution in America's eating habits. Julia Child was out there. Crate and Barrel had two stores in Chicago. Williams-Sonoma had a small store in California," Schultz recalls.

After Crate and Barrel declined the women's proposal to establish a franchise store in Bloomington, Zietlow and Schultz decided to start a similar business on their own. "Somehow we pieced together a patch of money. Marilyn took accounting. I went to a gift show," Zietlow says.

In November 1973, the women opened Goods, Inc. on the downtown Square, featuring kitchenware, china, and various accessories. "We still heard the same things as we entered the business community: 'What do these women know?'" Schultz recalls. "We had a lot to learn, true. But we learned a lot."

"There was a real anxiety, almost a depressed attitude downtown, about the College Mall," Zietlow says. "We really became cheerleaders for the downtown."

Goods proved to be popular, well run, and profitable. Schultz and Zietlow sold the store in 1988. Renamed Goods for Cooks, it remains a staple on the downtown Square more than three decades later.

Marilyn Schultz, left, and Charlotte Zietlow at Goods, Inc., the kitchenware store they opened in 1973. Courtesy photo



## CHARLOTTE ZIETLOW

The grande dame of Bloomington, **Charlotte Zietlow's** accomplishments are many, including helping save the Monroe County Courthouse, construction of the Justice Center, improved zoning laws, and helping to lead opposition that prevented construction of a controversial sewage treatment plant and a PCB incinerator.

In 1960, Charlotte Zietlow was a graduate student at the University of Michigan when she joined the campaign to get John F. Kennedy elected president and began knocking on doors in Ann Arbor to convince voters that, among other things, they had no reason to fear Kennedy's Catholicism.

"I think I changed about 40 votes and Kennedy won Michigan by less than a vote per precinct," she recalls. "It showed me that if it weren't for people like me knocking on doors, things would have been very different."

Still, she demurred when, not long after moving to Bloomington, Monroe County Democratic Chairman Ed Treacy urged her to run for City Council in the 1971 elections. "I said, 'Not me. I'm shy, and I don't do stuff like that,'" she recalls. Treacy told her that it would be instructive to attend a City Council meeting, where she watched nine men rubber stamp Mayor John Hooker's agenda in a 30-minute meeting with no discussion and without taking questions from the audience.

Zietlow says she realized Bloomington deserved better. "For me, the biggest issue was citizen participation," she says. And at the

time, there was no bigger issue to her than the spot zoning that was going on south of the Indiana University campus. Developers there were getting single family lots reclassified as multi-family, large houses were being chopped up into rentals, and apartment buildings completely incongruent with the neighborhood were going up with no recourse available to area residents.

*'I feel as if I should work in my community and the world and try to make it a better place.'*

Zietlow talked about the practice in her door-to-door campaign for City Council and won the election with 70 percent of the vote. Within a year she was elected by her peers as the first female president of the council — a council that flipped from 8-1 Republican to 8-1 Democratic in the 1971 election. For Zietlow, it was the start of nearly 45 years of public service that continues to this day.

Widely considered to be the grande dame of Bloomington politics and public life, the

soft-spoken Zietlow has forged coalitions and occasionally butted heads with major players.

In the mid-1970s she opposed construction of a new sewage plant south of the city that would have required a pipeline running back to the city through Clear Creek. She felt so strongly that she ran against incumbent Democrat Frank McCloskey in the 1976 primary and angered powerful Bloomington businessman Bill Cook as well. "He always held it against me," she says. Zietlow lost in the primary but the sewage plant was never built at the Lake Monroe site.

In the mid-1980s, Zietlow challenged another friend and ally in McCloskey's successor, Mayor Tomi Allison, over the city's negotiation of a consent decree that called for Westinghouse to build an incinerator to destroy the PCB contamination produced by its west-side manufacturing plant. Zietlow lost the mayoral battle by a slim margin, but the anti-incinerator movement won the war.

Zietlow scored a surprising win over three-term Republican County Commissioner Bill Hanna in 1980, and became the first woman ever to hold a commissioner's seat. She worked with preservationists, including Gayle Cook and Rosemary Miller, to rescue the deteriorating Monroe County Courthouse from demolition, and augmented the project with the construction of the Justice Center at West 7th Street and North College that now bears her name.

"(Monroe Circuit Judge) Francie Hill once said 'You're fearless.' I'm not really fearless, but I do things anyway. I'm not sure why. I do think it's the Lutheran in me. I feel as if I should work in my community and the world and try to

make it a better place," Zietlow says. "I think it goes back to love your neighbor as thyself and do unto others as you would want them to do unto you. I feel very strongly that sins of omission are worse than sins of commission. If you see something that should be done, you should at least try."

To view a video of the naming of the **Charlotte T. Zietlow Justice Center**, go to [magbloom.com/womenofbloomington](http://magbloom.com/womenofbloomington)



## VI TALIAFERRO

Judge **Vi Taliaferro** raised the bar for juvenile justice and put the best interest of the child first. She inspired others to do good works and became a role model for Bloomington women.

Viola “Vi” Taliaferro’s nine years as a Monroe County Circuit Court judge specializing in juvenile justice earned her citations as Woman of the Year by numerous groups; Judge of the Year by several others; and Black History Month Living Legend status by the City of Bloomington. The Indiana State Bar Association even has an Honorable Viola J. Taliaferro Award created by its Civil Rights for Children Committee.

“When I went on the bench, I didn’t know anything about juvenile law,” she says, reflecting back on her initial appointment in 1995 by Indiana Gov. Evan Bayh. “It was the toughest assignment I ever had in my life. The best way I can describe it is heart-breaking and heart-rending but joyful on occasion.

It’s always a good result when a child can be saved.”

“What’s in the best interest of the child?” her husband, George, interjects over a dining

*‘It’s always a good result when a child can be saved.’*

room-table conversation. “If she had a motto, that would be it.”

Taliaferro was born in rural Virginia and educated in segregated schools through high school. She excelled at academics, graduating from high school at age 14 and Virginia State College at 18. She met her future husband when she was enrolled at the historically black college. George, a star football player at



Indiana University, was serving his military commitment nearby.

The couple moved to Bloomington in 1972 when George was offered a position at IU. “I couldn’t get a job in the school system, so I decided to go to law school. It turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me,” Taliaferro says.

By the time she was offered a vacant judicial position in 1995 — becoming the first African-American judge in Indiana south of Indianapolis — she was ready. “Young people make the mistakes that young people make,” she says. “If you have them look around, you have to make them realize, you’re not always going to be 15. I don’t know how I found out how to do that, because I didn’t come from a home where people were beaten and neglected and the adults just walked away.”

Taliaferro quickly learned to put the child in the context of family — was there drug, alcohol, or domestic abuse going on? “I saw some wonderful things happen when parents cleaned up and regained their sensibilities,” she says.

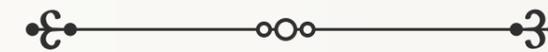
Though often described as a tough judge, Taliaferro shrugs at the label. “They weren’t there for me to feel sorry for them,” she says of the juvenile offenders who wound up in her court. “They were there for me to make some decision that would help. I always wanted to give people alternatives, ways to improve their situation and only put them in a facility if there was nothing else I could do.”

Her eyes redden when she reflects on the heartbreaking cases — abused, neglected, or sexually assaulted children. “When I did adoptions, that was always a happy day, because I knew a child was going to get an opportunity,” she reflects.

Retired since 2004, Taliaferro often is reminded of her time on the bench. “George

and I were eating at a restaurant not too long ago and there was a man seated in a booth who came over and knelt at our table. ‘Judge Taliaferro,’ he said. ‘I hear your voice every day.’ He’d been in trouble, been in my court, and he told me what it meant to him. He said ‘Now I am in charge of a group of young men, and every day I tell them and repeat to them the things you did for me.’”

# SUE TALBOT



**Sue Talbot** has been among Bloomington’s foremost education advocates, beginning as a first grade teacher, serving in the governor’s office, and as an elected member of the Indiana University Board of Trustees.



“I absolutely loved the diversity [at University Elementary],” she says. “We had so many kids from so many places, we developed our own ESL (English as a second language) program.”

And then everything she thought she’d be doing changed. “I’ve had a funny career. I was going to move to the suburbs, have a dog and a couple of kids, and I would have been happy

Talbot already was involved with the National Institute of Education promoting the Becoming a Nation of Readers initiative. She went back to IU, earned her doctorate, quickly became involved with state relations for IU, and helped launch the advocacy group Hoosiers for Higher Education.

After being elected chairman of the IU Alumni Association (IUAA), she ran for and won election to the IU Board of Trustees and served three terms from 2001 to 2010. Along the way, she’s also served as president of the IU School of Education Alumni Association and received the IUAA President’s Award. Twice, the Bloomington native has been designated a Sagamore of the Wabash, one of the most prestigious awards a Hoosier

*‘Women, in my experience, are more likely to engage in discussion and be inclusive.’*

with that,” she says with a grin.

First, she was named Indiana Teacher of the Year and runner-up for National Teacher of the Year in 1978. Soon, she found herself elected president of the National State Teachers of the Year organization.

In 1986, Indiana Gov. Robert Orr asked her to join his adminis-

Sue Talbot grew up in the University Heights neighborhood on the north side of the core Indiana University campus and knew she wanted to be a teacher when she attended McCalla Elementary School, loved it, and wanted to be like her teacher, Jean Biggs. After earning her degree at IU, she started teaching first grade at Arlington Heights Elementary School and then University Elementary School.

tration. “At the time, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton started governors promoting education reform, and Gov. Orr decided it was time they had a teacher in residence to advise on what classroom teachers did every day,” she recalls. Talbot commuted to Indianapolis for three years, traveled the state with the governor, and started finding herself affiliated with more and more education groups, both statewide and nationally.

governor can bestow.

“That’s your definition of a women’s movement right there, to be a person who gathers people together for discussions,” Talbot says. “Women, in my experience, are more likely to engage in discussion and be inclusive. My husband says women are the ones who hold communities together. The men seem to be the ones who take advantage of entitlements, while the women are the ones who hold families together.” And organizations.

It’s been an unexpected ride for a Bloomington girl whose father worked as the projectionist at the Indiana Theater for 65 years, a girl who literally sat on fabled IU Chancellor Herman B Wells’ knee many times. “I was around him a lot as a small child. I have a file of letters that he’d written to me over the years,” she says. “I’ve been so fortunate to have had the opportunities I’ve had and do the things I’ve done.

“I love everything about Bloomington and our community,” says Talbot. “Next to family and faith is IU in my heart.”



# GAYLE COOK

**Gayle Cook's** imprint on Bloomington through business, philanthropy, and historic preservation is everywhere. Projects include The Cochran House, Graham Plaza, Showers Plaza/City Hall complex, and Fountain Square Mall.

In 1976, the Cook group of companies were 13 years out from their humble beginnings in an east-side apartment complex and on their way to vastly unanticipated growth. The immediate problem at hand, however, was space for the Monroe Guaranty Insurance Company that Gayle Karch Cook and her husband, Bill, had created. "The Cochran House, built in 1850, was being threatened, and Bloomington Restorations, Inc. had noticed this problem and pretty much everyone thought the building would have to be torn down," Cook recalls. "The National Trust model was 'preservation is good business.' We thought, let's just see if it is."

The Cooks bought the dilapidated mansion on North Rogers Street and brought in the Pritchett Brothers Construction team that would serve them well in the decades to come. "We kept track of every cent spent on it, including the purchase price. When we were done, the exact cost per square foot was \$52.28 — much lower than any of the quotes we had to build a new building," Cook says.

That fueled the Cooks' passion for restoration and set a template for the way they'd go about it. Historic preservation was not merely about making old structures look pretty again. The goal was to renovate, restore, and make the buildings useful.

Cook felt an affinity for historical places and structures while growing up in Evansville,

*"The National Trust model was "preservation is good business." We thought, let's just see if it is."*

Indiana, within walking distance of Angel Mounds State Historic Site, a Native-American settlement abandoned in the 1400s. Long before the Cook businesses took off, Bill and Gayle took Sunday drives throughout the southern part of the state and wrote four editions of *A Guide to Southern Indiana*.

The foray into publishing was off the path to where the Cooks eventually found themselves as creators of the Cook Group Inc.,



a global medical devices developer and manufacturer, based in Bloomington, employing 13,000 people with annual sales of more than \$1.5 billion. Bill died in 2011, but Gayle continues to focus on historic preservation and philanthropy.

Significant attention has been paid — and with good reason — to the projects the Cooks have tackled, most notably the once-in-a-lifetime \$560 million restoration of the historic French Lick and West Baden Springs hotels, spas, and golf courses.

More important to Bloomington was the Cooks' launch of a renovation renaissance, beginning with The Cochran House and extending to the decaying 1929 downtown Graham Hotel, the Illinois Central Railroad Freight Depot, the Wylie House Museum, the development of the Grant Street Inn, partnership in the Showers Plaza/City Hall complex, and the Fountain Square Mall project that renovated and rescued the entire south side of the downtown Square.

Cook was a co-founder of both Bloomington Restorations, Inc. and the Monroe County Historical Society Museum, and served as a member of the Monroe County Courthouse building and grounds committee, which not only pressed to save the deteriorating 1907 courthouse from demolition but has worked over the years to ensure that the city landmarks, memorials, and statuary are well maintained.

Cook also has supported her alma mater, Indiana University. "In several ways I've sort of been involved in women getting equal attention at IU," she says. "I was co-chair of

the first Women's Colloquium in 1995–96. It was the first time they'd ever had something like that focusing on women. I've also been proud that Cook Hall (the basketball practice facility of which the Cooks were the primary benefactors) was built with equal facilities for women — that was far from the case prior to the construction of that building."

# TOMI ALLISON

Bloomington's first elected woman mayor, **Tomi Allison**, oversaw a period of unprecedented collaboration resulting in an impressive city growth policy plan, improved roads, additional fire stations, new parks, curbside recycling, and the repurposing of the Showers Brothers Furniture Factory into a new City Hall and research park.

Tomilea "Tomi" Allison's first forays into Bloomington public life included co-founding the local chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and working for the nonpartisan group Citizens for Good Government. Her legacy will be the relative peace — with one significant exception — and progress that she brought to city government during her 12 years as Bloomington's mayor from 1983 to 1995.

"I worked with Republicans all the way through," says Allison, a Democrat. "I'd deal with them straightforward, and I would not surprise them or try to undercut them. When I came into office I had always worked with groups in a facilitative manner," she says. "We worked back and forth. I want to listen to people and bring them together and figure out what we're going to do. There is a leadership role there."

Allison drew mostly praise but some criticism for her put the right people in place and let them do their jobs philosophy. No fan of top-down management, she assembled what she called "The A Team" early in her administration and met regularly with the heads of public works, the legal department, the controller, and the deputy mayor. "One of the first things we knew we had to do was fix the roads," she says.

South Walnut south of downtown was a two-lane clogged artery that turned into a smooth-running north-south corridor during the Allison administration. Sare and Smith roads were bottlenecks in the city's rapidly expanding east side until major improvements were made there.

Two new fire stations were constructed. Three new parks were created. Limits were placed on unrelated adults living together, blunting at least some of the incursion of student ghetto-styled rental houses. City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department took on increased child care services, including the popular Kid City. The summer music in the parks program was launched. Curbside recycling and a pay-to-put-out-trash system were inaugurated.

Through a partnership with Indiana University and CFC, Inc., the distinctive, saw-toothed Showers Brothers Furniture Factory, once one of the largest manufacturers of furniture in the world, gained new life as Showers Plaza — including City Hall, an office complex, and research park. Possibly most importantly, a city growth policies plan was put in place that



*'Compact urban form. That was launched in my administration.'*

has spawned tremendous infill and growth to the downtown's north side and the region parallel to the northern and western boundaries of IU. "Compact urban form. That was launched in my administration," Allison says.

But for all of her alliance building, Allison faced furious opposition when trying to negotiate a settlement to clean up PCB pollution produced by Bloomington's west-side Westinghouse manufacturing plant. She supported a consent decree with the Environmental Protection Agency that recommended construction of an incinerator to destroy the PCBs. At one point, protesters stormed a City Council meeting to try to stop it. Allison argued that the agreement wasn't ideal but it kept the city as a partner in the cleanup plan. In the end, questions about the funding and viability of the incinerator stalled and killed the project.

Looking forward, Allison says Bloomington faces new challenges. "I think the problem now is that the price of housing has pushed a lot of people out of the city. That certainly wasn't my intent when we revitalized the neighborhoods by putting in sidewalks and utilities and made improvements," she says. "We made our neighborhoods much more attractive, which is what we set out to do. But now there needs to be some thought given to making affordable housing possible."

# JOYCE POLING



As a county government official, **Joyce Poling** was instrumental in developing a comprehensive county planning document that continues to guide land use and development. She was and continues to be active in business, education, and as Monroe County historian.



Joyce Poling was already deeply immersed in the Bloomington community when civic leader and Republican Party matriarch Margie Hill asked her to run for the state Legislature against popular incumbent Democrat Marilyn Schultz. “I think they’d already asked every man in town,” Poling says with a grin. “It was already September and I was such a

long shot, and I was so innocent. It was a baptism by fire.” Poling lost the election, but Hill’s instincts about Poling’s abiding community interest were on target. “I think I was challenged by the fact there was lots to learn and lots of issues I really cared about. I think I also recognized I was more interested in local than the state,” Poling says. “I think the

*‘It was a baptism by fire.’*

government closest to the people suits me best. It’s an area where you probably feel like you’re doing more. You can actually see something happen.” Poling went on to serve two terms as a Monroe County Commissioner, became a County Council member, and then became a commissioner again after that. “I enjoyed the fact that every day was different and every day was a different problem to solve,” she says. “Whether it was the airport or a highway or issues with children, as a commissioner, you have it all.” The Evansville, Indiana, native and longtime Bloomington resident is comfortable with bipartisan cooperation. “Mayor [Tomi] Allison was a good mentor. She was very inclusive. There were always lots of

phone calls back and forth, whatever the issue was,” Poling says. “I remember when the county was trying to buy the property where (the massive downtown apartment building) Smallwood [Plaza] is. Mayor Allison invited me to go up to Minnesota to participate in a charette that might give us some ideas. We weren’t able to get (the purchase) done, of course, and we were disappointed we weren’t able to do that.” Poling counts as a success a comprehensive county planning document she hopes will continue to guide land use and development. “To me, it’s always about jobs,” she says. The longtime politico earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Indiana University in merchandising and special education and

found a way to use both early in her post-college career when she worked at Roth’s, a clothing store located where Kilroy’s on Kirkwood now sits. Working with Joan Burton, who for many years directed Stone Belt Arc programs, Poling helped arrange for special education students to come in to tag and steam merchandise. Poling is so well-acquainted with Monroe County that she serves as the county’s historian for the Indiana Historical Society. Most recently, she’s been serving as the community engagement representative for the Gayle & Bill Cook Center for Entrepreneurship at Ivy Tech Community College–Bloomington. “My job is going around to the regions, and I really enjoy working with the mayors and chambers and talking about how we can all work together to make it a better place,” she says. “I just think so many social problems we have can be solved, or at least made better, with more education and good jobs.”



## ELIZABETH BRIDGWATERS

**Elizabeth Bridgwaters** cleaned up the Near West Side, helped provide services for low-income and under-served people, improved our schools, and was a leader in Bloomington’s African-American community.

At the close of the 20th century, *The Herald-Times* asked its readers to vote for the Monroe County Woman of the Century. The readers chose Buena Mae Elizabeth Eagleson Bridgwaters — a fitting choice for many reasons — a Bloomington native whose life nearly spanned the century, from her birth in 1908 to her death in 1999. Her daughter, Elizabeth Ann “Betty” Bridgwaters, says the first thing she thinks about when she considers her mother’s public life is dedication to improving the Near West Side of Bloomington, where her mother was born and raised. “There were drainage problems, sewer problems — open sewers once you got west of Adams Street. There were bad sidewalks where there were any sidewalks at all,” Betty says. “Mother founded the Project Area Committee [that became the West Side Neighborhood Association]. She was always evaluating things, working on things.” Elizabeth, as she was known, joined the boards of directors for various community organizations providing services to low-income and under-served people, including the Monroe County Community Action Program, the United Way of Monroe County, the Bloomington Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Area 10 Agency on Aging. She was named a Sagamore of the Wabash for her leadership and public service by former Indiana Gov. Otis Bowen.

A firm believer in the value of education, the mother of nine children was, at one point, so dissatisfied with the education her children were receiving at the segregated Benjamin Banneker School she converted to Catholicism and enrolled the children in parochial school. She later had a change of heart and became an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and became the first African American elected to the Monroe County Community School Corporation board. She served from 1969–77, including a stint as board president from 1972–73. She was most proud of the school corporation establishing an alternative high

*My mother was in the Republican Party; that was the party of Lincoln.’*

school during her tenure because of her belief that some children did not fit in well with the traditional school structure. Bridgwaters sought the Republican Party’s nomination for mayor in 1975 and ran for state representative in 1976, both unsuccessfully. “My mother was in the Republican Party; that was the party of Lincoln,” daughter Betty says. “She was even on the National Republican Committee at one point.” Bridgwaters’ father, Preston Eagleson, was the first African American to play varsity sports at Indiana University (football, 1893–95) and the first African American to earn a master’s degree from IU in 1906. Elizabeth earned her bachelor’s degree in 1930 and worked for many years in the residence halls at IU. As a leader in Bloomington’s African-American community, Bridgwaters never shied away from acknowledging historic prejudices endured by black citizens, but also refused to succumb to them. “Life is not too long, and you can make of it what you want to,” she said in a 1997 interview. “You can spend your time running around hating folks if you want to, but your life is gone and what have you accomplished?” ✧

(above) A portrait of Elizabeth Bridgwaters, who died in 1999. (below) Crest Toothpaste was developed and tested in Bloomington. Procter & Gamble selected local matriarch Elizabeth Bridgwaters, at right, with daughters Judy, center, and Betty, left, for this advertisement that appeared in national publications in 1963–64. Courtesy photos

