

Bertha (Betty) Grueninger Stearns

By: Kathryn and Carl Grueninger, Jr and Carl Grueninger III

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Born: April 28, 1896, in Cincinnati, Ohio

Died: December 8, 1971 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Father: Edward Grueninger, born in Cincinnati, Ohio, was a Tinsmith in Cincinnati, Ohio

Mother: Bertha (Lehritter) Grueninger, homemaker, was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. She graduated from St. Mary's College in Indiana.

Betty Grueninger Stearns had one sister, Laura Grueninger Lipps, three brothers, Edward (a Commercial Artist), Walter (a Tailor of Men's Clothing) and Carl Grueninger Sr. (a Commercial Artist).

Betty graduated from Hughes High School in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1913. After graduation, she worked as a secretary in the Office of the President of the University of Cincinnati. Betty's friend, Peggy O'Brien, introduced her to IK (Irving Kip) Stearns through Peggy's husband, Pete O'Brien, in Cincinnati, Ohio. (Pete O'Brien played for the Cincinnati Reds baseball team). She later married IK, the President of Carolina Wood Turning Company, in the 1930's and moved to Bryson City. She was married to IK Stearns until his untimely death in November, 1942. Betty loved to play golf, fish and hunt with IK.

Betty's brother, Walter, had a son, William Grueninger. Walter died in the 1940's and his mother could not care for him. Betty took William in to live with her in Bryson City. In the late 1940's, Betty and William moved to Asheville, North Carolina, where William graduated from high school. William returned to Cincinnati, Ohio in the 1950's to work and care for his mother. In the early 1960's, Betty returned to Cincinnati to live near William and her brother, Carl and their families. During this time in Cincinnati, Ohio, Betty worked as an independent stock broker in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Betty frequently invited her niece, Dorothy Grueninger and her two nephews, Carl Grueninger, Jr. and Robert Lipps to spend time in Bryson City. IK and Betty often took them to their cabin on Noland Creek to hunt and fish. The Stearns cabin on Noland Creek stood on the west side of the creek, just beyond the third bridge as one walks up from the parking area. Throughout the years, Betty often expressed the sorrow she felt for their Noland Creek neighbors whose homes were taken by TVA when Fontana Dam was constructed.

She developed cancer and died in Cincinnati, Ohio in December 1971. Her body was cremated and a funeral service was held in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her remains were sent to Bryson City (Moody Funeral Home) to be buried next to IK Stearns.



**Betty Grueninger, 1913 Hughes
High School Annual
(Ancestry.com)**

MRS. IRVING K. STEARNS IS HOSTESS AT PARTY

BRYSON CITY, Nov 23 (Special)

Mrs. Irving K. Stearns entertained with a party at her home, "Solitude", on Leatherwood Heights, Tuesday afternoon. Three tables were arranged in the living-room, two for bridge and one for Chinese checkers.

Those playing were: Mrs. Stanley Black, Mrs. Daniel Bryson, Mrs. Leslie Brooks, Mrs. James Light, Mrs. Paul M. Wentworth, Mrs. Horace DeHart, Mrs. A.M. Adams of Cherokee, Mrs. Stearns, Mrs. Max Close, Mrs. Philip Padgett, Mrs. Thurman Leatherwood and Miss Jessie Shank.

Prize winners were Mrs. Leslie Brooks, Mrs. Paul M. Wentworth and Mrs. Thurman Leatherwood.

A salad course was served after the play.

(November 24, 1938 Asheville Citizen-Times)



Betty Grueninger Stearns and Kip at "Solitude" on Leatherwood Heights (Hospital Hill) in 1941. Several years after the death of her husband, IK Stearns, Betty sold "Solitude" – which she and IK had designed – to Bill and Glenna Ensley, who raised their family there from the early-1950s to mid-1960s. The home stood near the north side of the current hospital parking lot. Photo by IK Stearns, courtesy of Carl Grueninger, Jr.



Sixteen year old Carl Grueninger, Jr with his Aunt Betty Grueninger Stearns



Dorothy Grueninger (Betty's niece) giving January the mule a drink of Coca Cola near the Carolina Wood Turning lumberyard.

Photos by IK Stearns, courtesy of Carl Grueninger, Jr.



Flag lowering time at Solitude on November 15, 1942; Betty Grueninger Stearns and Joe Ghost. This is the last known photo taken by IK Stearns; he died of pneumonia less than a week later. Photo by IK Stearns, courtesy of Carl Grueninger, Jr.

Editor's Note

Betty's ashes lie alongside those of her husband, IK, in the Shank-Stearns and Leatherwood family plot. Others who attended the party she hosted on Nov. 23, 1938 (see above) who are also buried in the Bryson City Cemetery include Mrs. Stanley (Marianna) Black, Mrs. Daniel (Anne) Bryson, Mrs. Max (Lois) Close, Mrs. Thurman (Nell) Leatherwood, and Miss Jessie Shank. IK Stearns was the nephew of Nell Leatherwood and Jessie Shank.