

GIFT RESULTS IN THE CREATION OF THE GRACE HAUENSTEIN LIBRARY



Grace and Ralph Hauenstein

A common refrain spoken by friends of Grace Hauenstein is that she is one of the finest women in West Michigan, a model for women and men alike in the way she's lived her life for the past 93 years. Gracious, thoughtful, considerate, generous to a fault, for decades she has quietly gone about fulfilling her many roles as student, nurse, wife, mother and Catholic leader.

"I've never heard her say a bad word about anyone," says her husband of 73 years, Ralph Hauenstein, whose lead gift to the Aquinas College Library project has resulted in the creation of the Grace Hauenstein Library. "She's always been involved in Catholic endeavors and is all that a Catholic woman should be."

A native of Big Rapids, Michigan, Grace graduated from the nursing education program of Saint Mary's Hospital (the precursor of the current Aquinas

College—University of Detroit Mercy—Saint Mary's Health Center baccalaureate degree program). She worked as a nurse at Saint Mary's for about two years when she married Ralph, then a young reporter for The Grand Rapids Press. "He was my first boyfriend and I was his first girlfriend," Grace says, to which Ralph replies "We were just out of the cradle, what do you expect?"

When World War II began, the Hauensteins faced the most difficult challenge of their married life. Ralph was a colonel in the U.S. Army and was appointed Chief of the Intelligence Branch (G-2) at the headquarters of the European Theatre of Operations. For nearly four years, Ralph's top-secret work prevented him from communicating with Grace, save for an episodic letter. "It was very hard for her, having to raise three small children by herself and not being able to know where I was, much less if I was all right," Ralph recalls; "It was a

great sacrifice." "I didn't worry too much," Grace states, "I knew God was watching over Ralph's shoulder every day."

After the war, the Hauensteins devoted their attention to their family, the church and civic life in Grand Rapids as Ralph was developing his multifaceted business interests. An active parishioner at St. Stephen's for over 60 years, Grace first assumed her Catholic leadership role by organizing study clubs in the parish, a major undertaking in U.S. Catholic parish life in the 40's and 50's. She was later president of the Grand Rapids Council of Catholic Women, an organization whose purpose is to bring women together to share their faith, grow spiritually and unite in performing works of charity in the community and the world. She is also a Lady Commander of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, an international organization with roots in the Crusades whose purpose is to serve the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. Her work in these areas led to her appointment as a member of the Papal Foundation.

Grace has also been a long-time friend and supporter of Aquinas College. In addition to numbering Aquinas graduates among her children and grandchildren, Grace was President of the Friends of the Aquinas College Library and continues to place the library among her priorities. The entire Aquinas College community is privileged to honor her in perpetuity with the Grace Hauenstein Library.