

elementaries. She recalls with love and laughter her students' responses to her retirement. "One student asked me how old I was and I told him. He was a little shocked and then he said it was a good thing I was retiring because the class was going to middle school and wouldn't be there to take care of me." Mary still runs into her students, and was thrilled when former student Maria Lugue won the position of Glynn County Solicitor. Mary says Maria looks just like she did as a fifth grader.

It was actually Mary's success in teaching that brought her to the Golden Isles for the first time from Atlanta. Mary was teaching the granddaughter of Georgia's governor. Until she was assigned to Mary's class, the child had been afraid to go to school. The grateful governor told Mary that he wanted to do something nice for her. Mary, being Mary, thought for a minute and laughingly suggested that he make her lieutenant governor. Instead, the governor gave Mary and her husband, Jerry, two weeks at Jekyll Island, when construction of The Wanderer hotel was still in progress. Mary remembers the island as a primitive tourist spot; they would come out in the morning and find deer licking the salt off their car.

A call from Sea Island Co. President A.W. Jones Jr. in the 1970s lured Jerry Garrison to the coast again, where he built spec houses on Sea Island. After a few months working alone here, Jerry returned to Atlanta and persuaded Mary to move. As Mary says, "St. Simons gave Jerry the opportunity to be near the two things he loved the most – the shore and airplanes." Jerry had a number of offices during his St. Simons years, all on the airport grounds. He designed and built several residences on Sea Island and St. Simons Island, but perhaps his most interesting was the house



where he and Mary made their home. It was an old rectory, built by Anson Dodge, that Jerry took apart and moved from the grounds of Epworth to College Street, where it remains today.

Mary and Jerry lived out their retirement years in the old rectory, a far piece from her beginnings in Northeast Georgia, but not so different in atmosphere. Mary's memories of growing up in a little Georgia town are idyllic: a wonderful picture of life in a close and secure environment where folks looked out for each other. "One day," she says, "the school principal came into my classroom and said, 'Give me Mary Tappan!' As I followed him to his office, I was terrified of what might come next. When we got there, he announced, 'You don't need this class. I want you to go to the hardware store and get me the things on this list.'"

As Mary walked down the street on her errand, she saw a friend of her father's, who immediately demanded the reason why she was not in school. She told him about the errand she was running, and he said, "We'll see about that!" He called the principal and verified her story. When she asked him what he would have done had it not checked out, he replied: "I would have called your father!" Mary knew she wouldn't get away with much in Greensboro.



With America fully entrenched in fighting World War II, Mary left Greensboro at 16 and enrolled in Wesleyan College in Macon. It was that same year that she met Jerry for the first time. When Mary saw the tall young man in the USAF uniform, she said to herself, "If I were more than 16 years old, I'd be smart enough to catch that tall one!" She must have been wise for her years – within a year, they were engaged. Jerry's assignment as a flight instructor at nearby Cochran Field meant that they saw each other often, and Mary was happy to have him safe at home. Jerry, however, was applying for combat positions. As he told Mary: "I don't want this war to pass me by."

It didn't. At the end of 1944, Jerry was selected to fly B-17 bombers out of England. He flew 25 successful bombing missions, an amazing record for that day and time. Jerry bailed out once over France, when his engines failed. He managed to parachute down near his crew and learned, to his relief, that they were in free France and were safe. He kept his parachute with him until he got to England. When he learned that it was too torn to be mended, he packed it up and sent it to Mary, who was still in college in Georgia. His bombing missions completed as the war in Europe was ending, Jerry assisted in the evacuation of Jews from the concentration camps.

Jerry came home to Mary in Greensboro in the fall of 1945. They married on Dec. 4, at the home of the Methodist minister in Madison. Mary, of course, has a story about their wedding. "Those were the days when no one really had central heat, and fuel was scarce. So people only heated the rooms where they spent the most time. We arrived at the house in the early morning, and the minister's wife told us that we could get married in the