

Evangeline Maurits

Born: July 31, 1901

Death: March 26, 1986

Evangeline Maurits was born in the first house that her parents built on the corner of Lake Drive and Eastern Ave. It had four stories. At the time, the house was on the “edge of town.” The family had no maid because “it was too far out.” Evangeline was an only child.

Her father, Ruben Maurits, was one of the first doctors in Grand Rapids. He was an anesthesiologist and practiced mostly at Blodgett Hospital. Her mother, Angeline DeBey Maurits, was a soloist in “all the churches . . . in town.” Both her mother and she eventually became soloists in “all the oratorios at Fountain St. Church. After her mother retired, Evangeline remained a soloist at the church. At the time of this interview, in 1971, Evangeline, 70, had taught voice for 4 – 5 years.

Her family attended Fountain St. Church, according to Evangeline, because “her family was a little more liberal than the Dutch at that time. They were interested in advancing their thoughts on the liberal side of life.” Both sides of Evangeline’s family were Dutch. Her mother’s grandparents came from Utrecht, the Netherlands, and settled in Chicago. Her mother’s great grandfather had been a “famous Dominie [minister]” in the Windy City. Her father’s grandparents came from Nimveisen, the Netherlands, and settled in Ottawa County, MI.

When Evangeline was no more than three years old, her father brought home one of the first cars in Grand Rapids. They had no garage, so her father parked it across the street in a vacant lot. The car had no steering wheel, recalled Evangeline, “just a rod that every time it turned around, it [would] hit you.”

For her education, Evangeline went first to Congress St. Elementary School, then Miss Eastman’s School, next to Fountain St. School, and last to Ferry Hall in Lake Forest, IL. No further information was given about these schools, except for Miss Eastman’s. About this school, Evangeline said, “It was in her home on Barclay. . . . She was a lovely person. . . . The classes were small [with only] two or three children in each one. . . . [There were] all grades and very fine teachers.”

As a child Evangeline took dance classes with Miss Calla Travis at St. Cecilia Music Society. Her mother was also active at St. Cecilia. Evangeline remembered, “We all as children took parts in . . . dancing plays.” She added that there was “hardly a day went by that we didn’t have some music” in the house. With her mother’s singing and her father’s violin playing, they were “a musical family.” They also had musicians as friends, so after St. Cecilia programs or symphony programs, there were many musical “gatherings at the house.”

When asked about the importance of St. Cecilia, Evangeline said, “It’s about one of the only buildings in the United States that was put up by women and paid for by women. . . . It was an

opportunity for women who were musicians and had no place to perform. . . . It's [also] important to young artists that are coming up and growing up, that they have a place to perform before an audience.”

Evangeline was a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony, St. Cecilia Music Society, Women's City Club, Center Board of Blodgett Hospital, and Fountain Street Church.

Other Resources:

https://web.mail.comcast.net/service/home/~/?auth=co&loc=en_US&id=161117&part=2