

Mary Grigware

Birth: 1919

Death: March 14, 2017

Mary Grigware, 70 at the time of this interview, was born in Marshalltown, Iowa. As a child, Mary described herself as “inquisitive.” She wanted to know how things were made, especially cars, washing machines (she lived near a Maytag plant), and processed food. She also read “a lot of books about skin and care of . . . skin. My mother was always very sure that I never went to bed at night without cleaning my face,” Mary said.

Then, she read a book by Gaylord Hauser. He mentioned cleaning the face with steam, and Mary thought she would try it. And that thought was the inspiration for her facial sauna. At the time Mary invented and patented this machine, she and her husband, an architectural engineer, were living in Grand Rapids, MI. “. . . By using steam, [it] cleanses your face more thoroughly than with cream or with soap,” Mary explained.

Her husband created the prototype from “a little baby bottle warmer made by the Hanksraft Co. and . . . a plastic waste paper basket” that he cut down to fit the contours of his wife’s face. They then took this model to a design company in Chicago, where it was made into a “. . . very handsome piece of equipment,” according to Mary. Next, it was manufactured by the Hanksraft Co. in Wisconsin.

At that time, a “man whom Mary was working for” took the facial sauna to a “tool show” in Chicago. “The Sears people saw it,” said Mary. “[And they bought] the manufacturing right to sell it.”

After that transaction, Mary said, “I had nothing more to do with it, except to walk by a display in Sears and think, ‘There’s my sauna.’”

Mary had thoughts of other inventions, but she never followed through with them. For instance, she said one would have been “. . . a little dish with suction cups to heat baby food in without taking it out of the jar.” Today, Mothers would use a microwave oven to accomplish this task.

Other Resources:

<https://www.mylife.com/mary-grigware/mary-grigware?userMode=0>