

Teacher leaves \$275K

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Frances Hall was an old-fashioned Melrose teacher. Colleagues described her as prim and proper in her glasses and flower-print dresses she favored. She rarely socialized and kept such a low profile a search produced not a single photo of her.

In class, she was a strict disciplinarian. The kind of teacher students hated while they had her and loved as they grew older for the lessons she taught. The discipline was simply part of a greater love she held for her students.

When Hall died two years ago, at 86, she showed just how important Melrose and its children were to her. She left them a lasting gift: A \$275,000 bequest to the Melrose High School Permanent Scholarship Fund. The gift recently made it through the probate system.

"It was unspoken: When you were in Miss Hall's room, you behaved," said Harry Murphy, who was a gym teacher at the Roosevelt when Hall taught there. But Hall also took a personal interest in Murphy's family, always remembering to ask after his children, who had both been her students.

Hall grew up in Melrose, lived most of her adult life in the city and taught social studies in the Roosevelt School from 1944 until 1970, when she moved to what was then Melrose Junior High School. She retired in 1977. She graduated from Wheaton College in 1939 with a degree in sociology. Her fellow teachers remember her with respect as a teacher who had high standards and expected all her students to meet them.

Hall never married and had no children, nieces, or nephews. Her only sibling, Barbara Benoit, died in 1981.

Hall's longtime companion, Esther Lyman, a former Roosevelt principal, died in 1992 at the age of 93.

Hall left one-third of her estate to Mount Holyoke College in memory of her sister, who earned her master's degree there in 1940; one-third to Wheaton College; and one-third to the Melrose High School Permanent Scholarship Fund.

"She was very, very concerned about her children, she worked very hard for the kids, and she was an outstanding disciplinarian," said retired Melrose High School vice principal Peter Garipay, who taught in the same building as Hall when the high school was on double sessions.

Clearly of the old school, Hall wore glasses and favored flowery dresses. "She always looked prim and proper, always the lady," Murphy said.

"She wasn't the kind of person who was interested in being in a popularity contest," Murphy said. "I think she was so sure of herself in a professional sense that that

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didn't enter the equation. She was unique, I thought, just a very good person."

Retired Roosevelt teacher Betty Flannigan remembered Hall as a "very educational minded," teacher who did not socialize with the other teachers with the exception of Lyman. The two were close friends; they shared a house on Norman Road, and

they often traveled together.

In 1977 Hall retired and she and Lyman moved to Needham.

Hall seems to have kept her edge even after she retired. Although she was in her eighties when they first met, Hall's accountant, Donald Maloney, remembers her as being "very sharp."

"She was smart about business," he said.