

Margaret "Peg" Morrison
By BD Tharp

"The most important thing I've ever learned is that there's a lot more to learn, and I'm not through yet," Peg Morrison said. She's been a teacher, served in the military in World War II, worked as a bookkeeper and business manager in the medical field, as an editor, writer and playwright.

Her story starts in Winston Salem, North Carolina 86 years ago. The oldest of three children she shares that she truly had a wonderful life. There wasn't much money, but there was love and creativity, and a family of admirable individuals. "My father was always true to himself and true to his word," she said. "My mother taught me unconditional love and my Grandmother taught me to have faith in what God sent me for." She admits she has found inspiration in almost everyone she has ever known.

In 2007 Peg authored her memoir, *The Other End of the String*, which shares poignant vignettes of her life from 1926 to 1941. The title comes from the fact that she started walking very early and took a nasty fall on some gravel that skinned hands, arms, knees, legs, and feet. "After that fall I refused to walk. So Momma gave me the string on her apron to hang on to," she said. Having her mother on the end of the string gave her comfort, so her mother gave her a long piece of yarn so she'd gain confidence. As long as the string was attached to someone she trusted Peg felt safe and walked farther each day. "My Momma always said that God never lets loose of his end of the string." And that's been her view of life, that there has always been someone with a firm and comforting grip on the end of her now imaginary string.

When Peg graduated from school she became a teacher. "At that time teaching was all a respectable lady could do in the south," she said. After two years she decided to join the military during the Second World War. Her Momma was worried about her reputation, but Peg assured her that she was a good girl and this was one way to prove it.

"I tested very high in aerial photography interpretation and had my foot on the train to do the job when my name was called in the station," Peg said. They reassigned her to public relations and she smoothed the way for the military with the media and the legislature for support.

It was during her military service that she met the manager of a radio station in Raleigh, NC, Garrett Morrison. They were married in 1947 and lived in Charleston where she worked as a copywriter. In 1949 Peg had a severe case of bronchitis that became chronic and over time became emphysema. "At the time Penicillin was all they had to treat it and it didn't help. I even developed an allergy to it. The doctor suggested we move to a dryer climate, so we bought a trailer, packed the stuff we wanted to keep and headed for Arizona," Peg shared.

But fate had other plans. In Guthrie, Oklahoma they were run off of the road by an oil truck. They went to court and asked the oil company to replace their things, but the attorney threatened to keep taking them to higher courts and their money and all their things were already gone.

"Garrett went to work for Boeing as director of PR and I found a bookkeeping job," she said. After seven years they moved to Wichita where she studied weekends at the library and got an accounting position with a homebuilder. "I worked part time for a

couple of years and needed full time, so I went into the medical field as a business manager for an anesthesiologists association and after that, obstetrics.”

She continued with this line of work until the mid-1970's when Garrett became ill. Peg quit her job to care for him. “If you put on a smile and run around behind it long enough you'll finally feel it,” she said. It's obvious that she still misses her husband who has been gone a hand full of years, but enjoyed fully the years they had together. “I feel like one of the luckiest people in the world. I'm rich in family and friends.”

During the past thirty odd years Peg has written essays and poetry and had them published. A play she wrote was performed locally several years ago, but it's her series of sea creature poems she would like to see published to benefit children's education or the preservation of the worlds' oceans.

Peg shared that one of the best compliments she's received in her life is being put in the Plaza of Heroines at WSU. “I never found out who did that. I am truly honored by it. And this interview is a compliment, too,” she said.

She has been a Wichitan for almost 56 years and when asked what she might like to do in her next life she said, “I'd like to be me again, so I can find out all the things I didn't learn in this one. I can't understand people who are bored and think they have nothing to do. One of the saddest things in the world is not having a long list of things to do.”