

Mary (Minnikin) Wellein



Mary singing the “Wren Song” with fellow Wren June Macaulay, 2010.

that she could get one herself if she joined the Wrens and attend the monthly meetings at the HMCS *York*. Mary decided to join the Wrens, obtaining a position in the medical branch. She took a two-week course in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then practised nursing in a naval hospital at HMCS *Naden*, in Esquimalt, British Columbia.

Back in Toronto at the HMCS *York*, she assisted patients in the wards and helped with eye exams, x-rays, and other medical procedures. After only six weeks in the service, Mary was among the Wrens who lined the red carpet at the Royal York Hotel for the visit of Queen Elizabeth II. Children behind her were eagerly poking their heads between the lines of Wrens to catch a glimpse of the Queen, but were repeatedly pushed back by Naval officials. Mary advised the children to wait until they could see the Queen before they nudged their way through the row, and that is exactly what they did. This charming contrast between naval formality and childish rapture led the *Toronto Daily Star* to feature a photograph of the Queen, Mary, and the children in the June 30th, 1959 issue.



Mary with the Queen, 1959.



Mary's wedding with her friends from the Wrens, 1966.

On certain Sundays, Mary took part in the Church Parade where Wrens marched down Avenue Road, Toronto. When Mary moved back to Barrie when her parents were not well, she worked at Camp Borden. Her boss there provided transportation in order for her to attend the monthly Wrens meetings in Toronto. In 1966, Mary left the Wrens after seven years of service to get married. With her husband, she moved to Ottawa, and later Picton, where she currently resides. Mary fondly remembers her time with the Wrens, and continues to keep in touch with friends she met there.