

Meet Irene and Leon Hawker

By Margaret Fuson

If you want to meet an amazing lady with an astounding talent, get to know Irene Hawker! But first, let's go back to the beginning.

Growing up in Danville, VA, Irene and Leon were high school sweethearts. After knowing each other for 7 years, they dated for 6 of those 7 years. After high school, Irene attended Mary Washington University and Leon graduated with a BA degree from Hampton-Sydney in 1960. Leon and Irene have been happily married for 63 years.

Leon was the Athletic Director for the city of Danville before accepting a position with Crawford and Company Risk Management. He was manager of the Danville office until the company moved them to Mobile, Alabama where they spent the next 24 years. They have 3 children, 2 daughters and a son. To date, 8 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren complete their family.

Leon was quite an accomplished athlete, beginning as a 12-year-old playing basketball. He was a gifted athlete in baseball, basketball, football, and golf. He has been inducted into the Danville and Hampden Sydney College Hall of Fames. At fifty-five years of age, he was a -2 handicap in golf. Leon was recruited by the Los Angeles Dodgers and Baltimore Orioles and

while studying for final exams at Hampden Sydney, signed a contract with the Dodgers with a \$10,000 signing bonus only to find out too late that the Orioles wanted to offer him a \$20,000 bonus to sign with them!

Irene is also quite an accomplished lady. She started as a young child, having been taught by her mother to do needlepoint. As a homemaker, she raised 3 children of her own plus a 15-year-old relative who was tragically orphaned, and also cared for her invalid mother. As she was giving so much of herself to her family, she still found time to pursue her creative passion: needlepoint. I was absolutely amazed as I walked through their apartment, being shown incredible examples of her God-given talent spanning well over 60 years. During this interview, she sat in a chair that she embroidered 50 some years ago which is accompanying this article. In every room in their apartment, there are countless works of her expertise on the walls as well as her embroidered pillows beautifully accenting their décor.

The Hawkers have traveled to both Brussels and Madrid, Spain when their daughter served as a missionary in Madrid. When she and her family came back stateside to Midlothian, Leon and Irene moved to Midlothian in 2000. They both have a very strong faith and have been active in Bon Air Baptist Church.

In March 2022, the Hawkers moved to Brandermill Woods for health reasons. Irene states that she is as happy as a lark in her apartment here and continues to enjoy her passion for needlepoint! Leon is involved in the Writer's Group and the

Monday Night Christian Book Study. Please take the time to drop by their apartment and see for yourself what is, in my opinion, a museum of needlepoint!