

The year was 1933. The United States was in the middle of the Great Depression. Franklin D. Roosevelt became the 32nd president. Prohibition was the law, and Hitler was gaining power in Germany.

And in Shakopee, according to a Shakopee Heritage Society article by Eileen Schmitz, Edward and Florence Buesgens McGovern welcomed their first child, a daughter, Geraldine Ann McGovern. Gerrie was born at the home of her parents at 330 Fourth Avenue East. Her parents rented their house, and when the owner passed away in 1945, they bought the house and lived there the rest of their lives. Four years later, Gerrie's sister, Aggie, was born.

Her father, Edward, was a carpenter, and one of six sons of John and Catherine Rohe McGovern. They were raised on the family farm in Jackson Township, west of Highway 169 (now called Highway 69), west of the railroad tracks.



Geraldine Gerrie Ann McGovern married Andrew Alexander Heiland (1931–1998) on September 14, 1957 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Shakopee.



Gerrie's great-grandfather, John McGovern, was the original owner of the farm.

John McGovern, Sr., was born in 1816 in County Leitrim, Ireland. He came to America in 1843, as a settler-colonist in the state of Rhode Island. He married there and was employed in the roller mills. In 1857, John, his wife, Margaret Heslan McGovern, and four children moved to Minnesota. They lived in Shakopee until 1868, and then they purchased a farm three miles southwest of Shakopee in Jackson Township. At the time of his death, John McGovern, Sr., had the distinction of being the oldest member of the Shakopee community, dying one month before his 97th birthday.

His son, John McGovern, Jr., Gerrie's grandfather, married Catherine Rohe in 1890 and settled on the farm until 1926. They retired from farming and moved to Shakopee. Catherine was the daughter of Lambert Rohe, an early immigrant settler-colonist in Shakopee.

Gerrie's mother, Florence Buesgens, was from a family of six children. Florence's parents were Henry and Anna Meyer Buesgens, and they worked on a farm in Chaska, later moving back to Shakopee.

Growing up, Gerrie remembered that there were not many children in the neighborhood. Several of the lots were empty, though over time, more houses were built. On the north side of Fourth Avenue, the Leo Hirscher family lived. Gerrie remembered that Bob Hirscher was a great playmate. Other people in the area include the Butz Pass family, the Petsch family, and Mrs. Hennen, who was a widow with her daughter. Further east lived the Wermerskirchens, Judge Connolly, Stockers, Duffys, and the Bill Marschall family.

The McGovern family attended St. Mary's Catholic Church, and Gerrie attended St. Mary's School. The school had just four classrooms, two classes in each room. One teacher she remembered was Sister Nicolette, one of the Notre Dame Order of nuns who taught 7th and 8th grade.

In 1947, she attended Shakopee High School located on Fifth Avenue (and torn down in 2023).

After graduating in 1951, Gerrie worked at the telephone company in Shakopee. After two years of working at night, she found employment at Continental Tool in Savage. Later she worked in Minneapolis at the Sears store on Lake Street. A few years later, she returned to Shakopee and worked for Page & Hill.

Gerrie and Andy Heiland were married at St. Mary's Catholic Church September 14, 1957. Andy was born and raised in Shakopee. Andy was in the construction trade and later worked at Shakopee Senior High School in the maintenance department. He retired in 1996 and died two years later, in August 1998.

Gerrie and Andy had seven children: Dale, Lisa, Keith (who died in infancy), Cheryl, Renee, Craig, and Kurt.

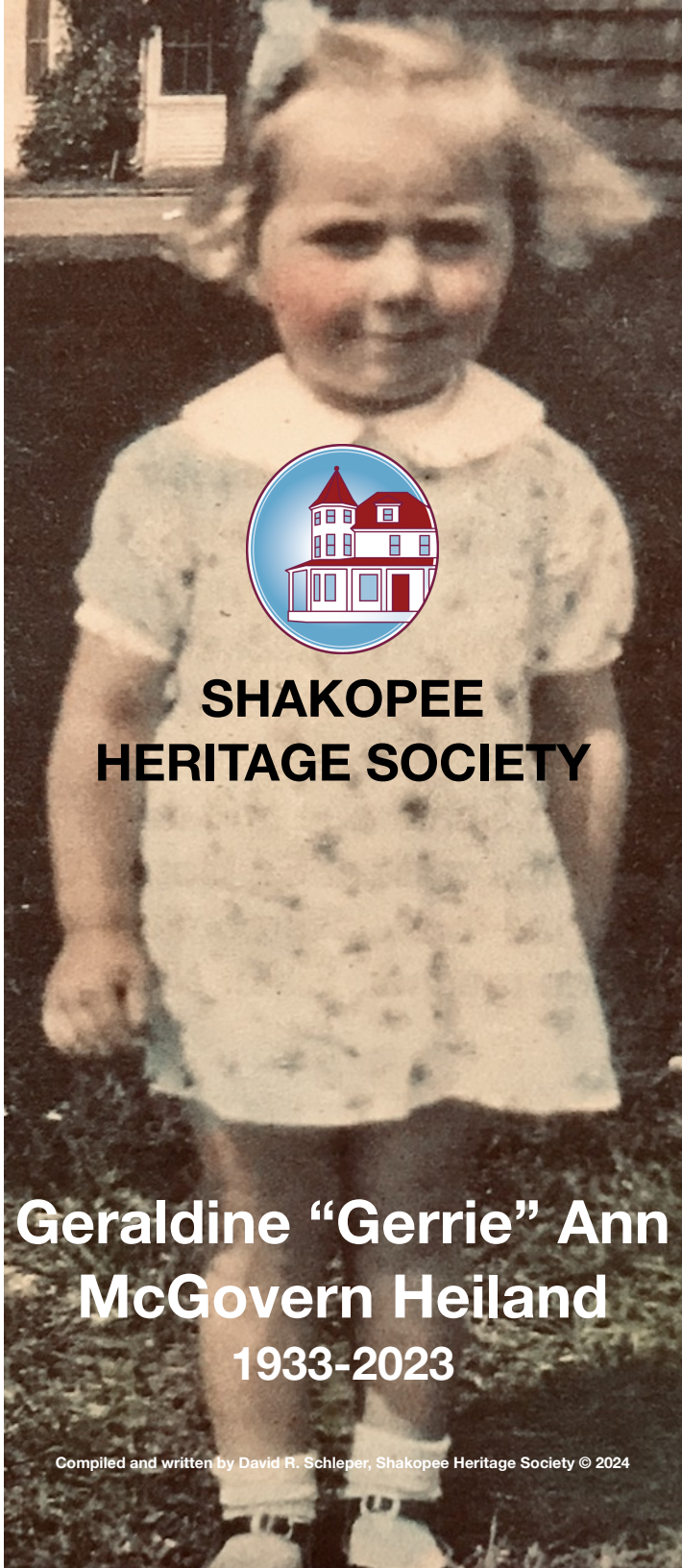
Gerrie kept busy with her family and friends. She volunteered and was active with the church, Loaves and Fishes, Mobile Meals. She also belonged to the Quilt Club, served on St. Mark's funeral committee for 22 years, and volunteered with the Shakopee Heritage Society and the Scott County Historical Society. She also enjoyed trips with the senior citizens' group and was an avid Minnesota Twins fan.

Geradine "Gerrie" Ann McGovern Heiland died April 8, 2023 in Chanhassen, Minnesota, and was buried at the Catholic Cemetery in Shakopee.





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Geraldine "Gerrie" Ann McGovern Heiland

1933-2023

Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2024