

Helen Marketti's Music Corner

Marion Ross *My Days, Happy and Otherwise*



During the 1970s, television audiences saw several TV moms taking care of their families. Some recognizable character names that come to mind are Carol Brady, Edith Bunker, Louise Jefferson, Florida Evans and of course, Mrs. C. (aka Mrs. Cunningham). Marion Ross played the role of Mrs. C on the ABC sitcom HAPPY DAYS for the entire run of the show which was eleven years.

In her memoir, *My Days, Happy and Otherwise* (Kensington Books, 2018), Marion shares heartfelt stories of her life and career. The book is hard to put down as she takes the reader on a journey where we feel we are taking part. During a telephone conversation, Marion discusses her passion for wanting to be an actress.

She was born in Minnesota and early on, she felt that she was destined to do great accomplishments and that she would be recognizable. "I

was thirteen years old when I decided I was going to be an actress. I knew it was something I wanted to do and I stuck with that dream my entire life," she explains. "My mother always told me that I could be whatever I wanted. I had an older sister and a younger brother. My brother had many health issues. I fell in the middle so I think that powered my tremendous drive to be somebody. By the time I was 21, I was under contract with Paramount Studios. Now, I will soon be 90 years old and when I look back, I think my gosh, I really did it!"

Marion's life was not an easy road. During her early days of trying to break into the industry and keep her career moving forward, she got married at a young age. Her first husband, Effie was an alcoholic. His role was passive and unmotivated. "Back then, there wasn't a name for alcoholism. It was accepted behavior. There were no labels. I went along with it because I had assumed this must be what married life is like. It never occurred to me that Effie had

a problem. I hadn't realized it until years later. There were no rehab clinics or places like there are now. Most women from my generation accepted what was. There was never a moment of questioning anything let alone standing up to it. Today's generation is definitely different."

Over a career spanning 60 years, Marion has secured many roles in television and film. She has worked with Hollywood icons Clark Gable, Tony Curtis, Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart. She has been in the company of Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart and Noel Coward. While her resume is lengthy and full of experience, it was not until she was in her late forties that she secured her most famous and recognizable role as Mrs. C on HAPPY DAYS. For a while, Marion thought she had missed the boat on her career. "I had started out so strong when I was first under contract with Paramount and then after the years had passed I began to wonder if perhaps it was now too late. My mother encouraged me to keep going, to keep moving forward."

ABC picked up HAPPY DAYS after its pilot. At around that time, the movie AMERICAN GRAFFITI was released and the play GREASE was playing on Broadway. Marion said it was the right mix for HAPPY DAYS to be successful as it brought back a simpler time and generation. The timing was perfect.

Marion remains in contact with former cast members of HAPPY DAYS. "We still keep in touch. In fact, we were all together recently for Ron Howard's birthday party. He is a wonderful man

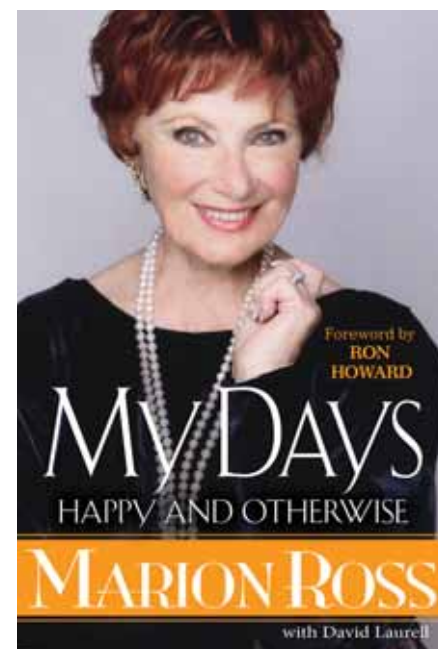
and so is Henry Winkler. All of us have remained close. We were close on the set as well which carried over years later."

My Days, Happy and Otherwise has a unique element as each of her former costars, her adult children and her personal assistant all contributed a chapter to what it was like being around Marion, working with her, their thoughts about her writing a book and so forth. "I thought it would be a good idea for everyone to participate since they are a part of my life."

When she was 60, Marion found love again with her second husband, Paul. "It was a wonderful and loving relationship. Sometimes things happen when you are not looking."

Readers will enjoy Marion's book as the stories unfold with some tears and great joys. We can identify with some of the journey we call life.

Marion encourages everyone to follow your dreams.'



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