

Elinore W. (Voigt) Craft
Nominated by Lorraine Rogers

Elinore Voigt was born in 1912 and was raised along the Wood - Clark County lines in the Town of Rock. In early childhood, she embraced the country as her playground being the only sister of four brothers. She graduated from Hillcrest, a one room school, and participated in public programs that were held at the Woodman Hall during the school year.

One of her first jobs was working for the Henry Knorr family. She performed general housekeeping services including laundry and cooking for the family. Later on, she also worked for the Laird family at their home in Marshfield. Little did she know that a half-century later, that little Melvin Laird, a child in her care, would serve his country as the head of the Department of Defense under President Nixon.



She came into her own when she found the love of her life, Gerald Craft. They were married in West Union, Iowa in 1940. During this time, the families around them became smaller as the men went off to war. Gerald joined the Army and was stationed overseas in the European Theater. One of Elinore's brothers joined the Army Air Corp and was stationed at China-Burma-India Theater where he served for 29 months. Both men were blessed to return home unharmed and healthy. When the war ended, it was time to look toward the future, deciding where they were going to settle down. Elinore and Gerald traveled the western states looking for jobs and the ideal place to live but found nothing to their liking. They returned to Marshfield. With help from her brothers, a new home was constructed in the shadow of what was then called Marshfield Senior High (now the Aster Assisted Living Facility).

Gerald found a job within walking distance at Roddis Lumber & Veneer Company and Elinore found a position as a cook in the cafeteria at the high school. They became comfortable in their little love nest. Although Gerald and Elinore Craft were never blessed with children, they loved the nieces and nephews they had. It was always a treat for the nieces and nephews to visit the Craft home in the city and do things they couldn't do in the country. There were sidewalks on which to ride a bicycle and sometimes Elinore would let them go for a popsicle at the corner grocery store located on 4th & Peach.

Many of their nieces and nephews attended and graduated from that school at the end of the block where Aunt Elinore and Uncle Gerald lived. When a large school event occurred and parking was difficult to find, the handiest place to park was in their driveway. If they missed the bus a friendly face was always just steps away.

Elinore's position changed over time at the cafeteria. She attended a School Food Service Short Course at Mid-State Technical College. After working in the cafeteria for 10 years, she became in charge of the lunch operation at the Senior High. There were requirements set by the State of how much protein food had to be served each day. It also depended on what type of surplus food was available from the Federal Government. She also had to devote many hours to planning menus as they were planned three weeks in advance. She and Ed Mitchell, the school district business manager, handled all necessary purchases. Meals were designed to provide variety, good flavors and a proper amount of nutrients - all within a specific price range.

In time, the other Marshfield District Schools began getting hot lunch from her kitchen. This included city schools (Lincoln, Grant and Washington) and rural schools (Nasonville and East Fremont). Purdy Junior High students were also sent to Senior High for lunch. In September 1964, Elinore helped serve 875 students daily. On the average, 868 students ate lunch each day for the years 1964-65. The Marshfield News Herald reported in 1963: "The City School District Operates Busiest, Biggest Cafeteria." It was all run and organized by Elinore Craft and the team of cooks and helpers that stood and worked by her side day after day, feeding hungry students. When the new Marshfield Senior High was being built, Elinore was asked for her expertise and input regarding the design of the new kitchen.

Elinore Craft was a legend in her time. By feeding hundreds of students daily with meals adhering to local, state and federal guidelines made with government surplus supplies, she helped generations to grow healthy and strong. The effects of her hard work are still seen in the District's school lunch programs of today. She changed lives one lunch tray at a time.