

Author's Friend Writes Gilmanton Tribute

By LAUROSE WILKENS

GILMANTON — No one in Gilmanton could believe that Grace had died. The news flashed over television and radio, and shattered the little mountain town which Grace Metalious, world famous authoress, chose to consider her home.

Folks gathered silently around the sets for the next newscast, people coming home for lunch listened in shocked amazement, and men coming out of the snowy woods stayed to wait for confirmation of what at first seemed to be incredible rumors.

But as the afternoon wore on, the bulletins proved to be only too true. Some lawyers came and got the town law and went and locked up the big house.

A few itinerant reporters appeared wandering around. A tension as of gathering storm clouds seemed building.

Folks began to realize that Grace had gone to Boston for a weekend and was never coming back.

'Were A Family'

It is not too hard to remember when Grace first came to Gilmanton. She and George and the children were a family then.

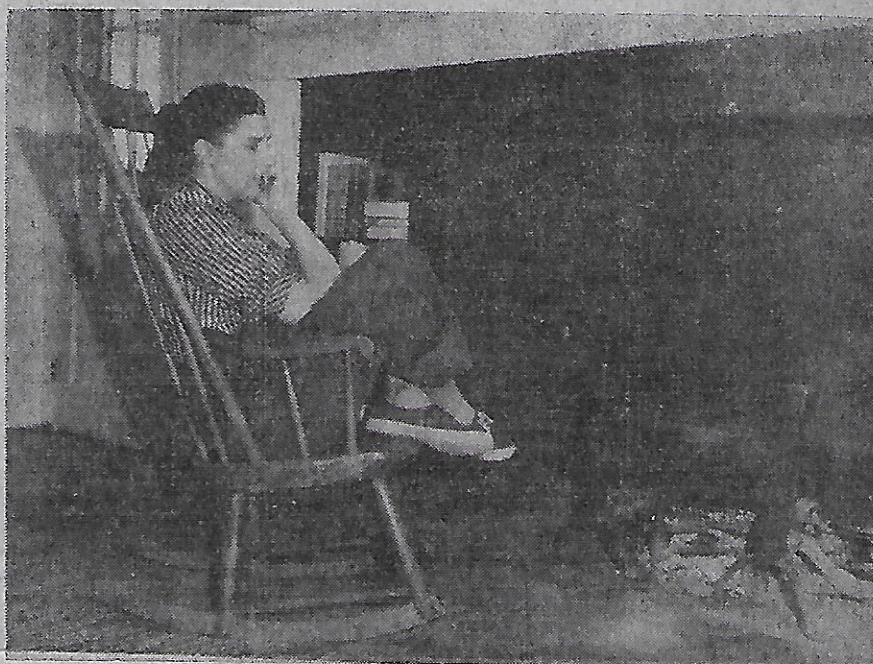
They lived briefly in what was then Warren's and is presently the village home of Fred and Beth Bucciarelli.

Word flashed around through town that an authoress was in our midst, and there was considerable excitement.

It was rumored that a big publishing house in NYC was dicker-ing for a novel she had written, and the Citizen sent this correspondent to interview the young mother of three children who seemed about to launch upon a successful career.

And the assignment turned out to be a pleasure. The slender young girl with the flashing brown eyes asked us in.

We were given a cup of coffee and the hospitality of the house. It did not take long, took only a short time to realize that Grace Metalious was an extraordinary woman of brilliant intellect. It took only a short per-



GRACE METALIOUS of Gilmanton at the beginning of her career as a novelist when she was advertised as Pandora of the Blue Jeans was photographed by Larry Smith of the Evening Citizen at the fireplace of her close friend, Laurose Wilkens, Gilmanton correspondent.

In those days Grace wore her hair in a pony tail which she discarded when she learned that her daughter, Marsha, Mrs. Edward Dupuis of 185 Highland St. was to have a child. "Imagine a grandmother with a pony tail," she laughed.

usal of the script freely presented for our appraisal to know that here was a real novel, written by a gifted person.

Never Printed

"The Quiet Place," that first book of Grace's, never was printed. The stormy career of a talented girl began shortly after.

It was a full three years after that "Peyton Place" was published, and Gilmanton struck the front pages of the country's newspapers. It seemed that as fame and fortune came her way, unhappiness followed the authoress.

The close knit fabric of the Metalious family life unraveled. Pressures from the business world troubled the gifted and sensitive woman for whom life was bigger than reality.

Grace's novels were bought by the movies for astronomical sums. They were reprinted in almost every country, so that travelers

abroad, waiting in railroad terminals or airports, saw on every news stand the famous orange, red and black of the "Peyton Place" covers.

Refuses to Leave

Grace clung to her home in Gilmanton, and always refused to leave the little town which seemed home to her. She loved her country home and finally refused to leave there for anyone or any reason, letting those who wished to see her come there.

Her children attended the town school, and her oldest daughter was married in the little white church at the Corner. And the world did come to her door, famous folk bouncing down over the dirt roads, asking the delighted townspeople for directions.

For somehow, in Gilmanton, Grace was Grace, a human being rather than a celebrity, a fascinating person no more individual-

istic than anyone of the rugged neighbors. Here were the hearts that loved her well, the folk who "knew her when", the children who responded to the love she poured on them rather than to her famous name.

And here are the hearts that are heavy with grief at the loss of a loved one, one would ask nothing more than that she should come in the door once more, electric with discovery, a book or a record clutched in her hand — to hear her say just once more "Oh, listen, LISTEN — just listen to this—" and then bring a printed page or a graven record of flaming life in the brilliance of her insight.

Hearts are heavy in Gilmanton, for as a little boy here in the house on the hill wrote to a friend this ill-fated Tuesday, when we learned the news: "Grace, the mother of Cindy, is dead, and we are sad."