

Dr. Opal Hurley Mann Green

“The UK, School of Human Environmental Sciences Hall of Fame is a tribute to Opal's life, her family, her spiritual strength, and her accomplished career in an era where few women achieved her success. It will showcase her belief in others because of her democratic collaborative spirit and her ability to fight for the least privileged in our society. It will also showcase the legacy she leaves in each segment of her life. Opal's life was driven by a passion and heartfelt responsibility to serve others, especially those who are deprived of many of the opportunities in our county. This award recognizes her lifelong passion for public service, the practice of democracy in her family, the classroom, the community, and world. Her passion was guided by strong spiritual beliefs to serve with integrity, and unconditional love that would result in moral actions to empower and inspire others to be their best.” *Dr. Patricia M. Sobrero, daughter of Opal Hurley Mann Green*

Opal Hurley Mann Green was the oldest daughter of the late James A. Hurley and the late Lourainey Engle Hurley of West Liberty, KY. Opal was the first child in her community to go to high school. Her father drove her the eight miles each way to school every day. Later, when she graduated from high school and wanted to attend college, her parents could not afford to send her. Opal had become an active 4-H club member, competed in contests, and her father had helped build a community club for meetings. Mr. Yandall Wrather was the County Extension agent. He talked to Opal's father and asked to take her to UK on a Saturday to see the campus. He convinced Opal and her parents that she should attend the land-grant university instead of Morehead College. The Saturday they visited UK, Mr. Wrather took Opal to meet the dean, at his farm. When the dean met them he was dressed in coveralls. Opal said "He looked like my Dad." She always felt comfortable with the dean afterward.

In 1941, Opal applied and was accepted into UK. Mr. and Mrs. Wrather, helped her find a place to live and a job, so she could afford to pay the tuition, books and fees. Opal worked her way through college and finished her course work in three years. In August 1944, Opal graduated and took a job teaching high school in Illinois for the fall term.

Opal married Arnold Curtis Mann immediately after college and near the end of World War II. Their 1945 wedding was a typical war time wedding and the bride wore a navy business suit. She began her professional Cooperative Extension career in 1945, as Assistant County Home Demonstration Agent, in Breathitt County, Kentucky. Later, she became the County Home Demonstration Agent for Pike County, Kentucky. She became the first woman County Coordinator in 1958. During these years she was a trainer for other Extension Home Economists throughout the district and state. During the 1970's and 80's many of the Extension Home Economists had been trained by Opal or by the agents she had coached, mentored and prepared for this exciting career.

Opal moved her family to Lexington, Kentucky in 1961 to become the District Leader of Home Demonstration Agents in the Central District. Later she served as State Program Specialist at UK, completed her Ph.D. at The Ohio State University, and then moved on to become Assistant Deputy Administrator, Home Economics and Human Nutrition, Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 1971.

In her position as an Administrator at the Federal level, Dr. Mann provided leadership to home economics programs in the national system of the Cooperative Extension Service. She often said, “This is very much like ‘missionary work’ no matter what level I work”. She assumed a leading role determining program focus, setting national priorities and direction and coordinating all areas of the national home economics programs. This was accomplished through participation of others across the nation. Opal did not believe top-down autocratic action was effective. She established teams and a strong group of state leaders. She created an environment for state specialists to work closely with federal program specialists, and she believed in understanding the situations before attempting to make a decision, or set a new direction for programs. The result was an effective national program focus with national initiatives and programs valued by state and local communities across the country.

One of the nationwide programs led by Dr. Mann was the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, designed to teach nutrition to food stamp eligible families and children in their homes and communities. This program employed 4,877 Extension staff located in county offices and reached 270,000 limited resource families each year. This program continues today across the US and is heralded as one of the most effective teaching models for changing behaviors.

As a result of Dr. Mann’s collaborative leadership efforts, the volunteer organization of Extension Homemakers grew to the largest volunteer educational and community service organization in the US. There were over 500,000 members across the US in local communities, who provided leadership, taught research-based practices, and worked to improve their community for families and youth. Dr. Mann served as advisor to this National Extension Homemakers Council. She and the leaders were friends, colleagues and equals leading empowerment of communities across the county and partnering with the Country Women of the World, a global society.

Opal’s life was driven by a passion to serve others, especially those who were deprived of many opportunities in our county. During her career, Dr. Mann encouraged the scholarship of engagement. She modeled these practices by authoring and co-authoring over 40 publications and manuscripts including the *People Programs That Work*, a series of publications on priority programs and issues. Opal was a popular speaker presenting over 150 papers and presentations prepared and delivered at national, international, state

or regional conferences.

In 1982, Opal retired and continued to embrace community projects that permitted her to continue the “missionary spirit” that guided her life. She was active in the Christian Church, serving on many committees, as deacon and as elder. Opal’s husband Arnold died in 1987. In 2000, Opal moved to The Villages in Florida. She started looking for a church and she joined a pioneering team that was planning to build the Fairway Christian Church in the community.

In 2004, Opal married James A. Green. Their work together with the Fairway Christian Church and love for travel kept them active and involved. They resided at The Villages in the home Opal designed as her retirement dream home.

Dr. Opal Mann Hurley Green was invited to be inducted into the HES Hall of Fame in 2007, but due to health reasons she requested to wait until the following year. After a courageous battle with ovarian cancer, Opal passed away on April 19, 2009.

Opal and her late husband Arnold C. Mann had two children, Patricia M. Sobrero, and Vernon Gene Mann; and three grandchildren, Dr. Gina Evans, Rachel Sobrero, LL.D., and Brandon Mink. Opal had three siblings: Mary Alice Lee, Orby Hurley and the late Jim T. Hurley.

Awards, Activities, Leadership, and Membership (Past and Present)

- “Who’s Who In Senior Executive Service/Science Education Administration”
- “Who’s Who In American Women”
- “Who’s Who In The East”
- “Who’s Who In The World”
- “Women In Action” The US Department of Agriculture
- “Women in Government” The White House
- “Your Guide to Women in the Federal Government” The White House
- Directory—Women and Womens’ Organization in Washington, D.C.
- University of Kentucky College of Human Environmental Sciences Faculty Hall of Fame, 1992
- Kentucky Colonel, Commonwealth of Kentucky, 1987 and 1988
- Alzheimer’s Association, recognition for extraordinary support, 1992
- America’s Paralyzed Veterans, recognition for extraordinary service, 1992
- Outstanding Alumnus Award, University of Kentucky College of Home Economics Alumni Association, 1983
- Home Economist of the Year, University of Kentucky College of Home Economics, 1983
- Merit Award for Outstanding Leadership, presented by the administrators of 1982 combined Federal Campaign of the National Capitol Area, Washington, D.C.

- Recognized in the US Senate for exemplary government service and outstanding contributions to Cooperative Extension Service, 1992
- Honorary Plaque and recognition by President Jimmy Carter, The President of the United States, designating as Charter Member of Senior Executive Service of USA, 1979
- Recognitions and Awards presented by National Extension Homemakers Council, for outstanding educational and leadership development service provided to the National Extension Homemakers, awarded multiple times during 1972-1982
- University of Kentucky Ag & HES Alumni Association
- American Association Family Consumer Sciences
- Associated Country Women of the World Country Women's Council
- Epsilon Sigma Phi, Mu Chapter
- Executive Women in Government
- Organization of Professional Employees, Department of Agriculture
- American Association of Retired Persons
- The District of Columbia Home Economics Association
- The National Extension Homemakers Council –“One In a Million” Member
- University Christian Church: Board of Directors Officer; Elder; Co-Chairman of “Elder Care” Team; and co-chair in Adult Education Department
- The Association of Administrators of Home Economics
- The National Council of Administrators of Home Economics
- The Commission on Home Economics of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
- The Extension Committee on Organizational and Policy Home Economics Subcommittee
- The North East Committee on Family Concerns
- National Advisor to the President and Consultant to the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors of the National Extension Council (1/2 million members in 46 states)
- The Administrative Council, Extension Service, USDA

Dr. Opal Mann Green holds a doctorate degree in adult education, continuing education, and administration from the Ohio State University; a Master of Science degree in sociology, and a Bachelor of Science degree in home economics education and social sciences from the University of Kentucky.