

# How Margaret Mary “Margie” Hauprich-Wilson sang and danced her way into legions of hearts

BY ANN HAUPRICH

“*For the first time in my life I experienced stage fright. I simply froze and never sang in front of an audience again for 70 years.*”

Of all the gifts Elizabeth (nee Kirby) and Edward Hauprich, Jr. bestowed upon daughter Margaret Mary, those of faith, hope, love and laughter remain the most precious. Make that mountain-moving faith, boundless hope, unconditional love and the therapeutic power of laughter.

These priceless inheritances, when intertwined with the resilient DNA passed down from her Irish-German ancestors, ultimately enabled Margie to evolve not only into a devoted daughter to Betty and Ed, a super sister to big brother Edward Germain (Jerry) and his wife Nancy, a doting Mom to James and “Nana” to Kai, but also a cherished cousin to many on both sides of her family tree.

A gem of a Gemini who made her Earthly debut in 1947, Margie’s sparkling personality continues to bring abundant light into the world via her passion for fashion, zest for Zumba and most recently demonstrating there’s nothing hokey about karaoke.

While her University of Massachusetts diploma commemorates Margie as a Physical Education major, her ever-evolving legacy includes making lasting impressions as a calligrapher, choreographer, dance instructor and co-director of a children’s theater group.

Those who know her best contend that cancer survivor Margie additionally earned an honorary PhD in empathy during a chapter in her life when she served as a mentor to developmentally delayed adults in a performing arts setting.

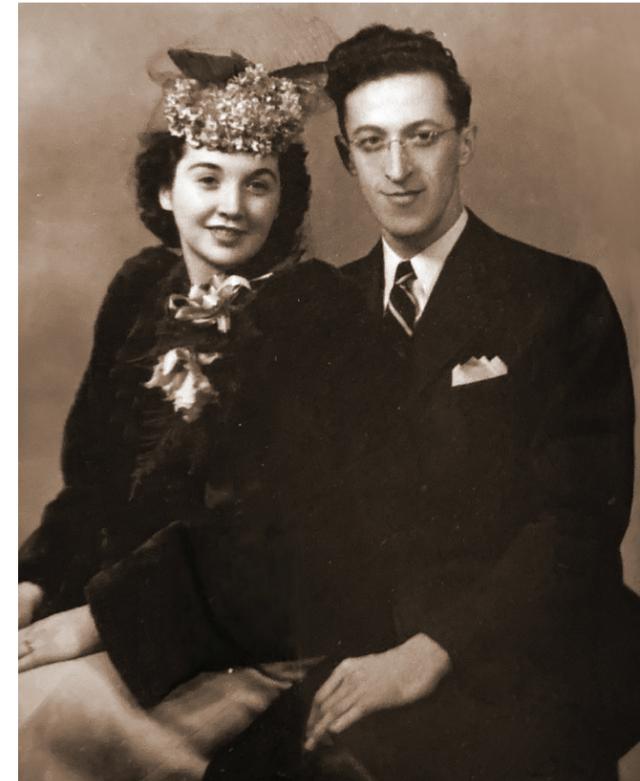
“I guess you could say I’m a late bloomer,” muses Margie, who insists she was painfully shy during much of her youth. “The funny thing is that as a preschooler, up to the age of four or five anyway, I used to love to sing. A favorite song was CRY made famous by Johnnie Ray. Could I belt that one out! I’d even get down on the floor pretending to cry and otherwise emote.” Then came the day when a well-meaning relative positioned her in front of a microphone at a wedding reception and urged her to entertain the guests. “For the first time in my life I experienced stage fright. I simply froze and never sang in front of an audience again for 70 years,” laughs Margie, adding she also (ironically) bowed out of dance lessons at an early age only to discover decades later that the latter was – and remains – her “true calling” in life.

As noted above, summoning the courage to sing in front of others took longer. The door to that performing arts door was unlocked a few years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic when Margie discovered the magic of karaoke while at a senior center.

She’s been hooked ever since.

Although her long, lush wavy curls inevitably invite comparisons to Carole King of TAPESTRY fame, Margie is far more likely to perform Barbra Streisand’s rendition of “There’s a place for us” (SOMEWHERE) as well as BRING HIM HOME (from Les Mis) in honor of her Green Beret son James who had served in Syria. (As of January 2025 James was in training with the US Army Special Forces to become a Diplomatic Liaison.)

Another of Margie’s hidden talents is that of being a Second Hand Rose because she occasionally pieces together stylish outfits from consignment shops when unable to find what she’s looking for in department stores or malls. “My mom was always a fashion plate when she stepped out. I always admired her style and throughout my formative years, I was shy and tended to be reserved like my mom. But as time went on, although she and I were incredibly close, I gradually began to take after my dad who wore many different hats. I don’t ever remember a time when he held down just one job.”



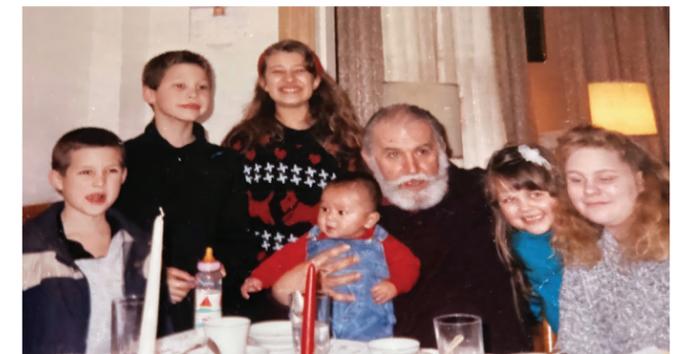
Margie’s parents Edward Hauprich, Jr. and Elizabeth “Betty” on their wedding day in 1941.



Margie and brother Edward “Jerry” circa 1948.



Margie ... ever the performer!



Sweet baby James held by his father Jim Wilson and flanked by his cousins (Left to Right): Matthew, Nathaniel, Tara, Marietje and Jennifer (circa 1992),



Proud mama Margie with Green Beret son James.

As Margie recalls, her personable, outgoing father's full-time position as Customer Services Manager at Allegheny Ludlum frequently required him to entertain visiting executives and other corporate reps after concluding a long day at the office. In modern vernacular, Ed had both charisma and energy to burn. So with a smile on his face and a spring in his step, he would carry out his extra duties while Margie and her mom kept the home fires burning. Jerry (who was five and a half years older than Margie) was by then maintaining a busy social life with his peers. Having said that, Jerry was as delighted as Margie when their dad once took on a second part-time job in an ice cream parlor because that meant he brought frozen treats home.

And while Margie recollects being proud when she heard her father's voice (he's believed to have been a bass) singing in their church choir and harmonizing as part of a barbershop quartet, it wasn't until after the 100th anniversary of her Dad's 1917 birth that Margie first learned that when he was in his late teens or early 20s Edward Hauprich, Jr. had been heralded as "a born entertainer" who won applause in Albany's Bleeker Stadium when he sang and played a piano accompanied by an accordionist, a drummer and a violinist or fiddler.

According to Margie's Uncle Don (born in 1924), his older brother was also "a natural athlete" who excelled at swimming as well as at competitive sports ranging from baseball to track and field. While reminiscing in 2017, Don merrily shared a memory of a Halloween during the early 1930s when Ed literally had to "run for his life" while wearing his cowboy costume after he'd made a "Smart Aleck" remark to the proprietor of a neighborhood deli that was famous for its pickle barrel. Ed reportedly outran the irate man but got into a lot of trouble upon returning home and was never allowed to enter that particular establishment again.

On a more uplifting note, Don fondly recalled that when he was a little boy Ed would walk him to and from Sunday services at the Westminster Presbyterian Church facing Chestnut Street. The best part was on the way home when (despite money being tight during the Great Depression) Ed would treat Don to a chocolate lollypop.

***It brings a tear to Margie's eye to realize how devastating it must have been for her patriotic father to be turned away when he attempted to enlist in the Armed Forces as America was entering World War Two because an X-ray revealed he had tuberculosis.***

Ed was confined to a treatment facility while his buddies were issued military uniforms and sent far away to serve our country. "During the six months when my Dad was quarantined, my Mom and Jerry (then a preschooler) had to go live with Nana and Grandpa Hauprich. Mom later told me how worried she was that Jerry might accidentally break something because Nana had so many fragile knick-knacks. Mom naturally missed Dad terribly because she wasn't allowed to visit him other than waving at him from behind a fence with tiny Jerry at her side."



Edward, Jr. working at Allegheny Ludlum.



Edward, Jr. and Don circa 1928 and 1936



A youthful Edward Hauprich, Jr. and wife Elizabeth "Betty" circa early 1940s.

***“Whether Jerry ever told Disney about the time when he dove into real life Aqua Man action to rescue his little squirt of a sister from a near drowning incident is not known. Nor is it known with certainty whether Margie's close call led to their Dad's decision to devote part of each day during a subsequent week's vacation to escort her to swimming lessons at a popular public swimming pool.”***



WWII era photo of Edward, Jr. with his dad and brother Donald on furlough from the Army after being injured while serving in the Middle Eastern/North African Theatre.



HAUPRICH COUSINS left to right: Tim, Jerry, Pamela, Char holding Ann and Margie "Chicken of the Sea" (circa 1953)

That same rambunctious tyke would go in to distinguish himself in the United States Coast Guard before navigating a successful engineering career during which he forged strong bonds of friendship with members of the Baltimore Yacht Club who shared his passion for sailing. A highlight of Jerry's life was when Roy Disney tapped him as a consultant for the adventure-packed sports documentary titled Morning Light.

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As for "Chicken of the Sea" Margie ... well ... she went on to experience some slow-motion "boomerang karma" in the early 1980s when she and several other college classmates were nicknamed The Sinkers because of their inability to stay afloat in the campus swimming pool. It wasn't until the day of the final exam when it was literally sink or swim time that Margie mustered the courage to take the plunge and somehow swam the required distance to score a passing grade.

And while her perpetually optimistic outlook reminds many of The Unsinkable Molly Brown, Margie prefers not to tempt fate by attempting a repeat performance of her now long ago "strokes" of luck.

Prior to being awarded her Phys Ed degree from U-Mass in 1987, Margie had majored in fashion buying and merchandising at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City for which she earned an associate degree in 1969. The latter accomplishments, she quips, "made it much easier for me to land a position at the prestigious Jordan Marsh department store in Boston when I made my impulsive move there in 1969." How's that again?

"I call it the weekend that lasted 55 years," Margie laughed as 2024 was drawing to a close.

In a bona fide truth is stranger-than-fiction story, a weekend to visit a friend in Massachusetts in 1969 stretched into a permanent engagement of sorts after Margie fell in love with the historic New England city along the banks of the Charles River.



Bride Margie and groom Gino Bridge.



A precious mother and daughter moment.



Margie's father Ed, Jr. and Nana Hauprich.



Margie performing graceful dance routines.

When Margie, who had packed only a single suitcase for the weekend, telephoned her parents in Albany to share her desire to remain in Boston a while longer, they offered to pack more of her belongings and soon thereafter met her to hand them over at a rest area near the last exit along the Mass Turnpike. Newly minted YUPPIE (Young Urban Professional Person) Margie eventually met and fell in love with US Navy veteran Gino Bridge and subsequently accepted his marriage proposal. The fact that the groom-to-be was of African-American ancestry might have created waves in some families of brides-to-be of Irish-German descent during the tumultuous American Civil Rights Movement of half a century ago. This, however, was decidedly NOT the case with either Margie's folks nor with Gino's parents. On the contrary, the families of both were "super supportive" every step of the way – including Margie's then 94-year-old Nana Hauprich who penned a letter giving her blessing to the forthcoming nuptials. The sole concern voiced by Margie's mother Betty was that some Albany guests might drive home from the Boston wedding reception under the influence of alcohol. To prevent this from happening, Father-of-the-Bride Ed chartered a bus to safely transport Margie's friends and relatives both to and from the festivities.

Although a parting of the matrimonial waters later transpired, Margie cherishes memories of the times she and the now late Gino shared and remains grateful that she took the plunge after she'd fallen for him hook, line and sinker. Margie is eternally grateful that life gave her a second chance at a happily ever after when she tied the knot with talented woodcarver Jim Wilson in 1983—although hospital emergency room doctors would later tease the newlyweds about putting their "in sickness and in health ... till death do us part" vows to the test on the very first night of their honeymoon. "About a week before our wedding, I'd begun to develop flu-like symptoms but resolved to tough it out, certain I'd recover and bounce back in time for the ceremony," remembers Margie. Instead, her face broke out in blotches and became bright red, giving a whole new meaning to the term blushing bride. Even so Margie soldiered on ... until she was curled up in a ball in agony on her wedding night and had to be rushed to ER. The source of her excruciating pain: a burst appendix!

True to her Unsinkable Molly Brown spirit, Margie would bounce back from this close call to resume what by then was a decade-long career as a dance instructor in elite private school settings. She would in later years become a dance teacher and mentor to developmentally delayed adults before taking flight around the turn of the millennium with her good friend Maria Longo Felix. "Maria and I had met while we were working at the YMCA north of Boston. She was a singer and I was a dancer so we came up with the idea of forming a musical theatre program that we co-directed for preschool and elementary school children. Maria was in charge of the music while I was the choreographer. Her husband Steven Felix shared his talents as the set designer and much more."

What most in Margie's performing arts circles don't know is just how much flying by the seat of the pants Margie did during the 1990s when after two IVF (in vitro fertilization) attempts had ended in heartache she hopped a Jumbo Jet bound for China where she became the adoptive mother of Sweet Baby James. "The bonding between me and James was instantaneous," beams Margie, who spent five weeks being observed by Chinese authorities before finally being permitted to bring the bouncing baby boy home to meet his adoptive dad and the rest of the Wilson and Hauprich-Kirby clans.

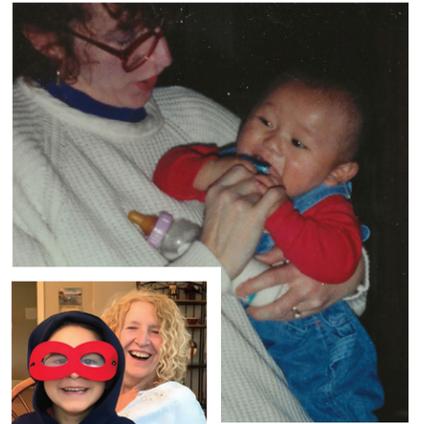
While blissfully settling into motherhood, Margie was diagnosed with breast cancer, underwent a mastectomy and endured six months of chemotherapy with trademark dignity, grace and a contagious sense of humor! "I now had the greatest motivation ever to remain optimistic and get back on my feet as quickly as possible," reflects Margie, who lived up to every cliché of the doting Mom – pouring heart and soul into the treasured role for which there had been no dress rehearsals!

Rather than becoming a Tiger Mom, Margie jokes she became a Dragon Mom after she and Jim made a dream come true for little James through the creation of a gigantic dragon carving for his bedroom. Throughout his formative years, both parents did their utmost to encourage his hobbies – which ran the gamut from karate to baseball, soccer, track and field, violin and theatre. One of the happiest days of their lives was when James wed his sweetheart and soul mate Anna (nee Temple) to whom he had proposed on the top of The Empire State Building in NYC on a most romantic Christmas Eve. Since exchanging wedding vows in Las Vegas in 2018, James and Anna have (in true military fashion) relocated to addresses in Tennessee and the state of Washington. As of the early part of 2025, the couple was planning to spend two years in Africa.

A constant in all of their lives has been the legacy of caring and sharing Jim has carved by transforming blocks of wood into heirloom quality masterpieces. "I believe a neighbor introduced Jim to woodcarving when he was a kid but he's pretty much self-taught. For years, Jim sat by the Charles River carving. Strangers would come by and place an order. He's carved all kinds of birds, cats, dogs, a pig once, and even a popover to hang outside of a restaurant.

He's famous in (the Boston suburb) Melrose," marvels Margie, "Everyone knows Jim from seeing him sitting outside carving. He's The Birdman of Melrose." Most recently forever young at heart Margie has become a doting Nana to grandson Kai with whom she enjoys spending time at the Boston Aquarium. The memories they're making are proof positive that miles can never truly part kindred spirits who are close at heart!

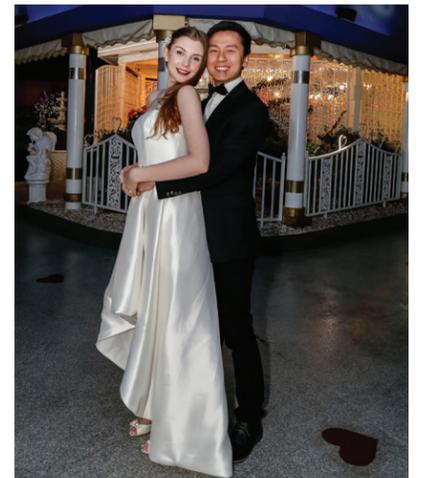
The same holds true of Margie's cousin Maribeth on the Kirby side of her family tree. "Maribeth's mother Mary was my Mom's baby sister. The two of them practically lived with us when I was growing up. Maribeth has always been – and will always be – more like a sister to me," smiles Margie. "I hope to spend much more time with her when I return to my Capital Region roots someday." Boston's loss will definitely be Albany's gain.



Margie holding her sweet baby James circa 1992; Carousel and inset photos are of Margie with her grandson Kai.



Carving made for James by his dad.



James and his bride Anna (nee Temple) in Las Vegas in 2018.