

Honoring Our Founder — Emily Virginia Hornbrook

Every year flowers have been put on the grave of Auxiliary Founder Emily Virginia Hornbrook. This is done to honor her memory and to remember the contribution that she and others have made to our organization, our industry and our nation.

In the 1934 National Convention Program, there is an article entitled, “The Story of the Auxiliary,” by “Mother” Mrs. E. D. “Emily” Hornbrook. In it, she recounts the obstacles that had to be overcome to obtain the right for women to organize. It took five years from conception to approval in 1919, one year before the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which granted women the right to vote. It is her silhouette that appears on the cover of our Auxiliary history, *A Partnership Unique*.

Mrs. Hornbrook passed away on June 28, 1952, at the age of 94. She is buried next to her husband, Edwin D. Hornbrook, PHCC National President 1901, 1902 and 1903.

Beginning in May, 1976, then-incoming Auxiliary National President Bobbie Smelter and her family visited Mrs. Hornbrook’s grave each year. Bobbie provided pictures of the gravesite in the Mount Washington Cemetery in Independence, Missouri. Bobbie and Chuck continued to visit the grave annually through 1999.

In May of 1976 Vice President Bobbie Smelter offered the following report of her visit to Mrs. Hornbrook’s grave, the first of many trips that she would make. She provided its location and showed photos of the gravesite.

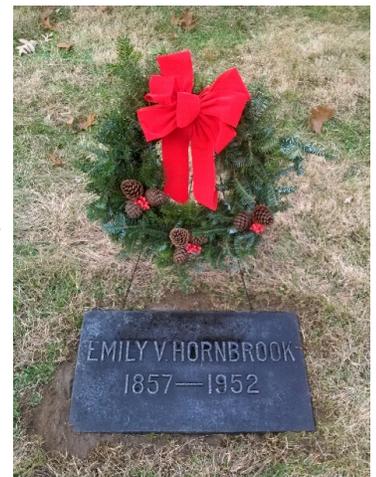
In this our Bicentennial year, I felt that it would be a real fine gesture on the part of the Auxiliary to go to the cemetery where Mother Hornbrook’s grave is. Since I only live sixty miles west of Kansas City, Independence, Missouri, I chose to volunteer to go down and do this. In the latter part of May, my husband and I drove to Kansas City, purchased some flowers at the Hill Flower Company, and took them to the cemetery. This is a very old cemetery. I am sure, at one time it was a very well kept, gorgeous place. There is still much beauty there.

We found the grave in somewhat bad condition. We washed it off and took some pictures, which I have presented to Helen Kokesh that will be in the Historian’s book. I was talking to two of the Life Members earlier this morning who, I am sure, were acquainted with Mother Hornbrook. I told them, at that time, in that cemetery, it was a most beautiful spring afternoon, and unless you’ve been in Kansas in the spring, you don’t know how wonderful it is. I felt closer to this Auxiliary than I can even describe to you, but I felt that the work that this wonderful woman started – if she were able to see what has gone on behind her, the wonderful groundwork which she laid, and how proud I was to be the next person to try to carry on what she started.

In 2000, Roger and Diane Peugeot assumed these responsibilities. We could not ask for more judicious grave tenders. It is a labor of love and we have a warm report on each visit. This year in honor of our 95th Anniversary, Roger put together some information on these visits.



First Vice President Bobbie Smelter on the first of many visits to Mrs. Hornbrook’s grave in May, 1976



Celebrating “Mother Hornbrook” - Emily Hornbrook, Mother of the PHCC Auxiliary

By Roger Peugeot

Women make such a quiet difference in our world. Today we celebrate Emily Hornbrook, born 1857—before the Civil War, who died during the Eisenhower administration in 1952. But her good work and her inspiration live on today.

Emily’s husband was a plumber, who in the very early years realized the power of associating with other plumbing professionals, which led to the founding of PHCC. For many years, the men met, to advance their careers and support their family businesses long before corporations “discovered” the plumbing industry. The wives were left to the “Ladies Programme” during those early meetings. Emily changed all that! Her vision was chronicled in the Smithsonian’s On The Mall article in March, 2013, entitled, “How Did a Group of Plumbers’ Wives Change American History?”

My wife, Diane Peugeot, has been a member of PHCC Auxiliary for many years—and I’m proud to say, I was one of the first three men to join! Delightful people doing good work, networking and making a difference. And certainly, the Auxiliary, being mostly wives who were mothers, knew how important scholarships are to supporting the next generation.

Now when Diane and I are not running our family plumbing business, we have a tradition. Diane is the most joyous and prayerful Grave Tender you will ever meet. Every Memorial Day and every Christmas without fail, Diane has a long list. Diane shops all year long to get the best values on designer decorative wreathes and wreath stands, if fresh ones are not available.

Meanwhile, I am tasked with loading up the string trimmer for my housekeeping duties to pretty up each grave. Lesson to self: Never, never run out of string for your trimmer. Or there will be heaven to pay.

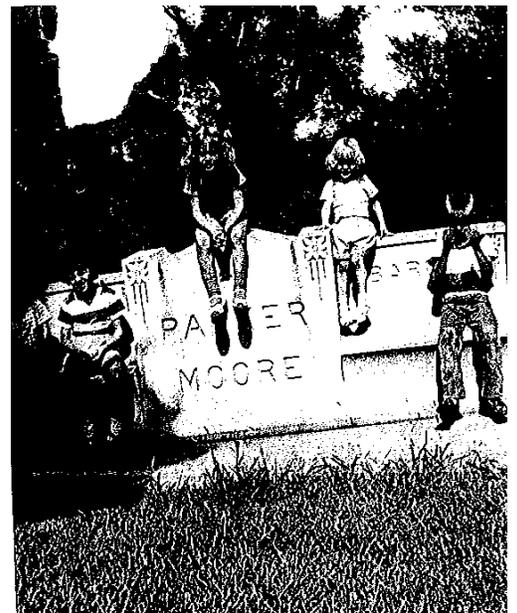
We visit four cemeteries in greater Kansas City on those weekends. And even though neither of us ever met her, “Mother Hornbrook” is an honored member of our extended family tradition.

Once we arrive, Diane doesn’t even need a map—she remembers where each loved one’s grave is. Emily Hornbrook’s grave is in Mount Washington Cemetery in Kansas City, Missouri—that’s the one with many famous people. Mother Hornbrook’s grave is across from Mr. Byrd, as in Emery Byrd Thayer, the famed department store that rivaled Macy’s.

Diane offers up the prayers and we enjoy a contemplative moment. And especially in the spring we often have a picnic, with wine—we stand and toast the departed. It’s one of the most meaningful traditions we have, and just one reason I love my wife—she has taught me that no one is ever forgotten if you but take a moment to recall them in your heart.

So—just to remind you of the power of starting something—an organization or a tradition-- that will outlive you: Together the PHCC Auxiliary and the PHCC Educational Foundation scholarship programs have awarded more than \$4 million to deserving young men and women across the nation. God bless Emily Hornbrook, and EVERY member of our PHCC Auxiliary. You are loved and appreciated.

--Roger Peugeot (roger@rogerthep plumber.com)



Diane Peugeot in 1952, commencing her lifelong passion for visiting the graves of loved ones. Shown here with her siblings and cousins, the little blonde second from the right. The elaborate Parker/Moore bench is just a few steps from the grave of Emily Hornbrook, founder of the PHCC Auxiliary. Diane decorates Mother Hornbrook’s grave twice every year.

One More Story for You ~

This Memorial Day, Diane and I of course visited Mother Hornbrook's grave, and found it in need of extra scrubbing and TLC before we took the photo of the gorgeous wreath Diane had purchased for her.

When we returned to the truck, we turned on the radio. Because the great blues singer, BB King had just died, the radio station The Bridge was playing his songs. Now I thought I knew all of BB's songs, but apparently I didn't.

Diane grabbed my arm and cranked the volume, as BB's voice sang out:

*"There's one small favor I'll ask of you:
See that my grave is kept clean."*

There are certainly no accidents in the universe. We sat in the truck, too moved to drive, thinking about how the Auxiliary supported Mother Hornbrook when she moved to the nursing home, in small measure to honor her for supporting NA- PHCC and her husband's life work in building our industry that supports so many family-owned businesses. We are blessed to part of this great family.

~ Roger Peugeot, May 29th, 2015



[B.B. King - See That My Grave Is Kept Clean](#) [Lyrics | MetroLyrics](#)

Well, there's one kind favor I'll ask of you
One kind favor I'll ask of you
Oh, there's one kind favor I'll ask of you
See that my grave is kept clean
There's two white horses in a line
Two white horses in a line
Two white horses in a line
Gonna take me to my burying ground
Well, my heart stopped beating
My hands are cold
Well, my heart stopped beating
And my hands are cold
Well, my heart stopped beating
And my hands are cold
I believe just what the Bible told
Did you ever hear a coffin sound?
Did you ever hear a coffin sound?
Did you ever hear a coffin sound?
Then you know that the poor boys in the ground
Dig my grave with a silver spade
Well, you dig my grave with a silver spade
Dig my grave with a silver spade
Let me down the golden chain
Have you ever heard the church bell tone?
Ever heard the church bell tone?
Did you ever hear a church bell tone?
Then you know that the poor boys dead and gone
I feel so good
One kind favor I'll ask of you
One kind favor I'll ask of you
Its one kind favor I'll ask of you
Please see that my grave is kept clean