

PEOPLE

The Father of Mother's Day

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GAZETTE PACKET

In the late 1800s, Frank Hering was the University of Notre Dame's star quarterback, coach and captain of the football team before becoming a history professor and the school's first athletic director. But even if his name is not familiar, mothers everywhere will be celebrated this weekend with the holiday he championed more than 100 years ago.

"Throughout history the great men of the world have given credit for their achievements to their mothers," Hering said of his desire to get formal recognition for a day dedicated to celebrating mothers.

While the first national observance of Mother's Day took place in 1914, Hering began his public appeals 10 years before President Woodrow Wilson signed the holiday into law. As Grand Worthy President of the Fraternal Order of the Eagles, he called on Aeries across the country to join in his effort.

"This was before women even had the right to vote," said Alexandria FOE Aerie 871 Worthy vice president Dave McDermott. "Frank Hering rallied Aerie's across the country to celebrate mothers."

Hering's idea for Mother's Day was inspired by a visit to a fellow Notre Dame professor's classroom. He observed his col-

league handing out penny postcards and asked what the students were writing. The professor replied: "Anything. Anything at all as long as it's to their mothers. We do this every month in this class. One day a month is mother's day."

On Feb. 7, 1904, Hering suggested establishing a national day honoring mothers to a gathering of the Fraternal Order of Eagles in Indianapolis. The service organization jumped on the idea and began a grassroots campaign among the Eagle membership, enlisting several states and municipalities to establish local Mother's Day observances.

"Hering was the Grand Worthy President in 1909 and 1911 and used his influence to continue to help spread the idea," McDermott said. "Thanks to his efforts, President Wilson signed the act into law in 1914."

The Eagles went on to play a similarly prominent role in helping launch Social Security and Medicare, among other causes, and currently endow the Fraternal Order of Eagles Diabetes Research Center at the University of Iowa.

"Despite Hering and the Eagles being credited with establishing Mother's Day, we don't plan any special events at our local Aerie," McDermott said. "We'd rather encourage everyone to spend the day with their mothers and celebrating the holiday with their family."

Fraternal Order of the Eagles leader credited for national holiday.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED

Frank Hering, center, is considered the "Father of Mother's Day," a holiday he championed in the early 1900s as Grand Worthy President of the Fraternal Order of the Eagles.