

# Alton woman recounts her history with fallen Virgin Mary statue at Catholic Children's Home

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - Marliyn Hope, formerly Waide, remembers driving past the soft-cut Italian marble statue of the Virgin Mary every day with her father when she was a child.

The statue, which fell sometime between last Monday evening and Tuesday morning due to unknown causes, was given to the children's home by her father's union, she said. Hope said her father, Frank Joseph Wade Sr., was an officer in the union affiliated with the Alton Glassworks. She said he would point to the statue of the Virgin Mary when they drove past, saying his union helped bring it over from Italy in the late 1940s - early 1950s.

Staff at the Alton Catholic Children's Home have possibly dated the statue to 1924, but Hope said that date would be impossible, because her father was born in 1914, and started working at the glass works at 16. Even after starting his employment, Hope said her father had to work her way to the position of officer in the union before he could have been a part of such a gift.

"That is the story, he always said that," Hope said. "My father would say he and his union had purchased it for the children's home, and they had it brought over from Italy. That had to have been in the 1940s or 1950s. His union got together the money to buy that for them."

Hope said she was not sure of the price paid for the statue, but said her father was steadfast to his story. She said her entire family was Catholic, and attended St. Mary's Church in Alton.

"My father was well-known in the community as an umpire for baseball and fast pitch softball," she said. "He did announcing for the games as well. He was very well-known. In fact, when he retired, one of the teams gave him a jacket."

She said Waide did a lot of umpiring and announcing for games held at Hellrung Park. Currently, Hope is living as a writer in Kansas, but she said she felt "horrible" at the news her beloved statue had fallen.

Currently, the cause of that fall is under investigation by both staff at the home and the Alton Police Department. The home's current director Michael Sheldon-Montez said he is not sure if the fall was caused by tumultuous weather that weekend or the work of vandals. He said the statue was found last Tuesday morning broken from its platform by the ankles, and fallen in a way, which caused the torso and head to separate.

"It's a beautiful, beautiful statue," Hope said. "I can't imagine that they won't repair it and put it back up. It hurts, because it's part of my childhood and family history. When I read about it, it hurt me to the core."

A graduate of the Alton High School Class of 1960, Hope returns to Alton from time to time. Each time she visits, she said she always drives past it to see it, because it reminds her of her father.

"I hope they repair it and replace it, or maybe put it somewhere safer," she said.

Previous interviews with staff from the Catholic Children's Home revealed the statue was recently restored, meaning many outdoor stains and evidence of weathering were removed, as well as what was left from former paint jobs once covering the statue. It was brought back to its original Italian marble finish.

A reporter from Riverbender.com called the Catholic Children's Home to confirm Hope's story, and maybe expound upon it, but that call has not been returned at this time. In former interviews with Sheldon-Montez, he said he was not sure if the home would replace the statue, nor were they sure of its exact value.