



DANNY MILLER PHOTO

Afternoon light hits the Flavel mansion located at 15th Street and Franklin Avenue in 2016.

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SCRATCHPAD

Mary Louise and the Flavel name

By ERICK BENDEL
COAST WEEKEND

In the early 2000s, director Gus Van Sant wanted to use the Flavel mansion on Franklin Avenue and 15th Street in Astoria in his film “The Last Days,” an art-house look at the slow, pathetic decline of a Kurt Cobain-type musician.

At first Mary Louise Flavel rather liked the idea, according to local historian John Goodenberger. The Flavels had a history of supporting the arts and boosting Astoria’s cultural standing; offering up their famed family residence for the project would carry on that tradition. Van Sant even said he’d do restoration work on the tumbledown relic, which had become a neighborhood eyesore since Mary Louise, her brother, Harry Flavel, and their mother, Florence, abandoned it in 1990.

Then the question came up: How would the house be portrayed in the movie?

What Mary Louise learned didn’t please her: The house would symbolize the main character’s fall from grace, as this once great and promising figure retreats into himself and his life falls apart.

Mary Louise didn’t want her childhood home, built by her grandfather in 1901, associated with that kind of vibe — though, because of the Flavel family’s decline, it already was. In the end, the filmmakers pulled out,



THOMAS ROTT PHOTO

Features Editor Erick Bengel.

and the mansion continued to decay until Greg Newendorf purchased it in 2015.

A theme that emerges in conversations with people who knew Mary Louise — who was living in Portland and died of natural causes last month at age 93 — is that she was, at all times, mindful of what her actions would say about her *as a Flavel*.

In her youth, Astoria was a small town where old families strove to keep their names respectable, accord-

ing to Goodenberger. As Astoria royalty, the descendant of Capt. George Flavel, she knew the world would view her every success and misstep through the lens of her distinguished lineage.

Mary Louise was destined to be a talked-about figure in Astoria whether she wanted to be or not. And the Flavel name, with all its hereditary baggage and responsibility, would have been hard to uphold,

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