

Elizabeth Wickenden was the eldest child of William Elgin Wickenden and Marion Susan Wickenden (née Lamb). Both parents were natives of Toledo, Ohio and graduates of Denison University in Granville. They'd been married barely eight months when Betty (as she was called) arrived, on 8 May 1909. At the time, Will was an engineering grad student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Will never got a degree from Wisconsin. During Betty's first year, the new family moved to Boston, where Will took an assistant professorship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They lived on Bradford Terrace until their house in the new suburb of West Roxbury was completed. On 14 April 1913, Marion gave birth to a boy, named William Clarence Wickenden. Although both Will and Marion came from large families, they stopped after two children.

In 1918, Will went to work for Western Electric Company in New York City, so he moved the family to Montclair, New Jersey. Betty toured Europe with her family during 1924-25. She attended Montclair High School, but her parents, dissatisfied with the public school, sent her away to the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, an all-girls boarding school in Natick, Massachusetts. They expected her to proceed to Wellesley College, but she chose Vassar instead. Admitted in 1927, she majored in economics with a minor in English. After graduating in 1931, she spent another year touring Europe.

With aspirations of becoming a novelist, Wicky (as she was then known) was advised to do social work in order to learn how other people lived. So rented a fourth-story walkup in Greenwich Village and took a job with the Emergency Exchange Association (a barter scheme organized in response to the Depression). There she met Arthur "Tex" Goldschmidt, a political young Texan who'd recently graduated from Columbia University.

Wicky and Tex moved in together. On 27 May 1933, without consulting their parents, they went before a Manhattan judge and got married. One of Tex's friends, who'd signed as a witness, felt compelled to write a letter to Tex's mother to assure her that Tex hadn't made a horrible mistake. The marriage lasted 67 years, and Wicky bore Tex three children.

Marriage and children didn't end Wicky's career. She continued working under her maiden name and long into her first pregnancy. When a congressman called at her office and was told she was in the ladies' room, he asked if she was having her baby there!

When Tex got involved in Roosevelt's New Deal, the couple moved to Washington, D. C., where Wicky volunteered in the Transient Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). Volunteer work led to an administrative position, for which she was paid only a half salary. When FERA got phased out, she transferred to the Works Progress Administration, and that led to positions in the National Youth Administration and the Federal Security Agency.

With a growing passion for public assistance and social welfare, Wicky left the government in 1941 to work as a registered lobbyist for the American Public Welfare Association. She represented the association in Washington, monitoring Federal legislation and explaining it to policy makers around the country. She did much of her work from home, hiring help for the housekeeping and childcare.

Without air conditioning, summers in Washington were uncomfortable. In 1945, Tex and Wicky purchased a neglected 19th-century farmhouse for their summer home. It was located on 130 acres in the Catskills near Durham, New York. They preserved its neoclassical facade, but arranged for many improvements, including electricity, running water, a double fireplace, flush toilets, lawns, a telephone,

a television, and even a dishwasher. The fields and orchards reverted to forest, but Wicky surrounded the house with gardens that she tended with care as long as her health allowed.

Tex's career prompted the family to leave Washington in 1951. They moved to an apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Wicky hired herself out as a consultant and lobbyist, advising politicians, political organizations, and governmental agencies on Social Security and Medicare. She published pamphlets and bulletins, wrote articles, gave talks, and even testified before Congress. Her publications from this era include:

- [The needs of older people and public welfare services to meet them; an analysis and description of public welfare experience \(1953\)](#)
- How to influence public policy; a short manual on social action (1954)
- The military program and social welfare (1955)
- The social cost of residence laws (1956)

When Tex's work for the United Nations took him abroad in 1957-58, Wicky and the children accompanied him, driving across Europe, through France, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, to Tehran. UN policy forbade Wicky from working in Iran, but Tex's friend Taghi Nasr introduced her to the Minister of Court as an expert on social issues. Wicky visited orphanages and prisons and advised the minister on related matters.

In 1962, Wicky published "Poverty and the law; the constitutional rights of assistance recipients", a pamphlet describing how welfare agencies infringed on the rights of their clients. From then on, she was much sought-after for her expertise. She was made a Professor Social Policy at Fordham University, where she taught a graduate seminar from 1979 to 1983. She also taught at the City University of New York and Hunter College and helped organize a program on Social Welfare Law at New York University. She served on the Board of Directors of the Children's Defense Fund. She lobbied against efforts to curtail Social Security.

In 1947, Wicky's father Will passed away after a heart attack. Her mother Marion lived on until 1961. Wicky's youngest daughter Jeanie died in a car crash in 1971, and her brother passed away in 1975.

By 1989, Wicky had retired from public life. She and her husband downsized their possessions and moved to a retirement home in Haverford, Pennsylvania. He passed away there on 21 September 2000, and she followed him on 1 January 2001, the first day of the 21st century. She was 91 years old, survived by a son, a daughter, four grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

On 9 October 2004, most of the survivors gathered at the old summer home in Durham. As none of them had elected to hold the property, it had been sold in 1993 to Cathy Kaiser. With her consent, a small hole was dug, and Wicky and Tex's ashes were interred together with a short, private ceremony. No marker was placed.