

# **Tribute to Mary Weaver Pelphrey Laird**

## **Introduction**

This is a tribute to the life of Mary Weaver Pelphrey Laird, mother of Judy and Jim Pelphrey and sister to Dale Weaver and Ruth Weaver Saltzman. Her parents, Helen and David, and her brother, Ardyn Weaver, preceded Mary in death.

This tribute is divided into four parts:

Part 1. Mary's Obituary

Part 2. Daughter Judy's final letter to her mother

Part 3. Eulogy for Mary by sister, Ruth Weaver Saltzman

Part 4. Eulogy for Mary by brother-in-law, Glenn Saltzman

## **Part 1. Mary Weaver Pelphrey Laird Obituary (1933-2008)**

Mary Weaver Pelphrey Laird, 74, passed away after a valiant struggle with cancer, Saturday, March 8, 2008. She left this world peacefully with her daughter, Judy, by her side. Mary was raised in Findlay, OH. She was a 1951 graduate of Findlay High School. In 1952 she married David Pelphrey and they later divorced.

Following graduation, Mary was employed by the Marathon Oil Company, Foodtown and Dow Chemical Company. After moving to Columbus, she worked for the Warner P. Simpson Company and the Delaware Fire Department. Mary was a life member of the Howard Methodist Church of Findlay. She

attended Broad Street Methodist Church while living in Columbus.

Mary had a life of suffering with severe bi-polar disease. Despite the many obstacles she encountered with that disease she brought great joy to her many friends and family by her unselfish volunteering for various charities, especially, the Columbus Literacy Program.

In addition to her parents, David and Helen Weaver, her husband, Lloyd Laird, her brother, Ardyn Weaver, and her nephew, Jon Saltzman, preceded her in death.

Survivors include her daughter, Judy Pelphrey of Findlay, her son Jim Pelphrey (Lisa) of Prague, Czech Republic, two grandchildren, Sean Pelphrey of Yuma, AZ and Jessica Pelphrey of Auburn, MA. Other survivors include her sister, Ruth Saltzman (Glenn) of Kent, OH, brother, Dale Weaver (Eleanor) of Findlay and her sister-in-law Audrey Weaver of Elyria OH, plus 14 special nieces and nephews, several cousins and her dear friend, John Coleman of Columbus, Ohio.

The family expresses its deepest gratitude to the staff at the Heartland Victorian Village nursing home and the Heartland Hospice for their never-ending care and support.

In lieu of flowers a memorial contribution may be made to the Heartland Hospice, 6500 Busch Blvd., Suite 210, Columbus, OH 43229, or Howard Methodist Church, 220 Cherry Street, Findlay, OH 45840, or the charity of your

choice. The Coldren-Crites Funeral Home in Findlay, OH are handling the arrangements.

## **Part 2. Daughter Judy's Final Letter to her Mother. (Read at Funeral by Pastor)**

Hi, Mom!

It's Friday and usually I'm getting lessons done at school and then going home to do laundry so I can visit with you on Saturday. This Friday is the first time in three and a half years I don't need to do lessons and laundry before making the trip to Columbus. I wanted to visit with you one more time and share some memories. Do you remember my seventh birthday? You made a cake shaped like the number seven and you bought and hung seven dresses on the kitchen wall. They were very pretty. I think I probably would have liked a new bike or some kind of a ball better.

Yes, I know how hard you tried to make me a Barbie Doll and dress me in frilly pastel dresses and put bows in my ponytail. Unfortunately I was more of a Calamity Jane. I don't know when you realized that your little girl preferred tennis shoes and t-shirts and needed room to run, play games, or ride bikes to the creek.

Gosh, it doesn't matter. I'm just glad you understood me and I do like dresses, but, with pockets. Mom, letting me be myself is such a wonderful feeling. I love that about you. Remember Jim and me coming to Columbus on the bus on weekends? Jim was o.k. But I especially liked it when my

high school friends (Nancy, Jill, Robin, Lucy and Lisa) would come down for a girls' weekend. We would shop and eat and do girl stuff. You'd pick us up at the bus station and we'd go back to the apartment for a special treat of jell-o in tiny plastic brandy snifters. We'd suck out jell-o and make plans for Saturday at the kitchen table. Later, we'd camp out on cots in your walk-in closet. Most of our plans involved shopping. We would go shopping at Graceland or hop a city bus and head for Lazarus to shop in the basement for bargains.

You'd send us off with a few quarters for the bus and a snack. One trip to Lazarus I remember telling you about Nancy and me pretending to be French tourists. Two French girls visiting America and shopping at a bargain basement store downtown Columbus. That's rich! Mom, you just laughed and shook your head and said, "Oh, girls". Thanks for letting me come to your home for a girls' weekend. My friends always thought you were fun.

Mom, you have to know you were the best mom you could be. I know a lot of conversations you started were about you not being there for me. I know that feeling must have been awful. Well, I never felt like you weren't a good mom. You always showed love for your children and were so proud of us. Even in the worst of times you were always happy to see me. You were always "there" even though you didn't feel that way. I think because you had so many friends and family that were close to you and loved you so much; they made sure that your love was known to me. These special family and friends filled the gaps that you felt you left.

Because these people cared so much for you, they made me feel like I never missed out. Isn't that what family and friends do, fill gaps for special people- like you? There are so many parents that are in the same household and don't show nearly as much love, concern, and support that you gave.

Mom, do you remember eating out at the Kahiki Restaurant? Oh, my! How could you forget? That was your favorite spot to take me for special occasions. We celebrated many birthdays over good Chinese cuisine.

I know you remember me coming every Saturday over the past few years. I'd walk in and say, "Hi, Mom". You'd light up. An endless smile and warm hug you'd give as you said, "Oh Judy! Honey, honey, honey." It was great to be welcomed like that. I had many quiet times at Heartland. I had fun doing crafts, sitting outside, and taking naps in the T.V. room with you. I enjoyed shopping for you and making lists that I would lose in my purse. Most of all I enjoyed slowing down with you. I'll always cherish the special time waiting with you during the Blizzard of 2008 for you to have peace.

There are so many more stories to remember and share with you, so, I'll write again. Bye for now.

I love you,

Judy

March 2008

### **Part 3. Eulogy for Mary by Sister, Ruth Weaver Saltzman**

How many people are there in your lives today that have been there since the day you were born?

When I was born I had a two and one-half year old big sister. Eventually we two girls were sandwiched between our two brothers—Ardyn and Dale.

We grew up on a farm, and had loving parents. In her childhood, Mary was known for her beautiful smile, and her cheerful disposition. She had many friends and Dale and I as her slaves!

In those years Mary took scrap booking to a high level decades before it became a popular hobby. I'll add she also carried the Wig fashion well beyond it being in Vogue!!

Following high school Mary married Dave Pelphrey. Soon he was in the Air Force—served in Korea. When he returned they were stationed at Lowery Air Force base in Denver. There Jim was born. A year later they returned to civilian life in Findlay where Judy was born. Shortly after Judy's birth Mary suffered what was later diagnosed as a post partum psychotic episode. This was the beginning of a life long fight with the disease of Manic Depression—now called bi-polar disorder.

Mary loved her children so much. She loved having parties and people around her. Our friends, Lorrie and Fred Lowe

sent a lovely note. Fred wrote, "Lorrie and I were remembering your sister and Lorrie particularly has fond memories of the correspondence Lorrie's mother had with Mary that went on for several years. Once Mary enclosed a teabag so Helen could enjoy a nice cup of tea. This was very special for Helen and she talked about it often"

But as the years went by the disease took a toll on relationships, on her work, and on her life.

For Mary, her highs were very high and her lows were very low.

During the deep depressions we saw the truly ugly side of mental illness. But between those episodes my sister was the wonderful mother to Jim and Judy, the favorite Aunt to my kids and all her nieces and nephews. She never missed sending cards and gifts for their birthdays.

After her second husband died Mary developed a wonderful friendship lasting over 20 years with John Coleman. We call him her angel on earth. He never missed visiting her at least twice a week for the 10 years she was at Heartland Victorian Village.

Mary, as you join your loved ones in Heaven, we hope you have the joy and peace that are so long overdue.

March 2008

## **Part 4. Eulogy for Mary by Brother-in-Law, Glenn Saltzman**

I first met Mary when I was ten years old and attended Jolly Boy's 4-H Club meetings at the Weaver home, supervised by Ardyn, Mary and Ruth's brother. Ardyn ran the meeting and Mary and Ruth and Dale served us cookies and Kool Aid. As much as I loved showing my cows and attending club meetings, I just might have enjoyed getting to talk to Ruth each month even more.

I have been a part of that family ever since and consider them my own. Those sixty-two years, and fifty-one years of marriage to Ruth somewhat qualifies me talk about Mary. When you have been a part of a family that long, you probably know at least fifty per cent of their stories, and today I want to tell you several you probably don't know.

The last few years have been very tough for Mary and her family as she fought her mental and medical battles. She has been fairly unresponsive for a long time; in fact she hasn't recognized me for several years and always thought I was her brother Dale. I think when she gives her final report to St. Peter, Dale will get extra credit for his many visits. I can just hear St. Peter say, "You mean Dale visited you twice last Saturday?"

For me, there have been folks in Mary's life who have taught me many lessons about how we should treat our fellow man.

Ruth mentioned that John Coleman, Mary's friend, was a saint, but what she didn't mention was that for the last ten years he has visited Mary twice a week, needing to take two bus rides each way and walk an additional five blocks...that is four long bus rides and walking ten blocks twice each week. John would stay with her for several hours, take many of her clothes home to launder because the harsh nursing home soap bothered Mary's skin...and all of this for nothing beyond their friendship.

This African-American man, who, because of a life of poverty, never attended school and could not read or write, and, he was partially blind. He doesn't like to travel and did not want to come here today, in part because of some of the issues he has faced over the years. In John, Mary was blessed with the best friend a person might ever have.

I know I am partial about my wife Ruth, the best person I have ever known in my life, but in her, Mary had the best sister a person could ever have. She has visited Mary three times a month for many, many years ... and made that three hundred mile trip every ten days without complaint...even when Mary didn't know her because she knew Mary needed her. Mary was blessed to have the best sister any person could ever have.

And what can I say about Judy? She, because Jim had continuous important government assignments overseas, was the lone other family member to be there for her Mom. She visited Mary several times each week in Columbus ... and made sure that her treatment was the best it could be.

Mary was blessed to have the best daughter anyone could ever dream of having.

As a psychologist, I sometimes wonder if God doesn't place folks who are mentally ill, or slow, or different, or difficult on this earth as a test to see how loving and accepting each of us can be. How does each of us react to folks like Mary? Do we ignore or mistreat them? Are we sharp with the slower paperboy or custodial assistant or homeless person? You see, being a loving and accepting person isn't just about doing it once in our lives; it is about doing it every day, with every person we meet. It really isn't a final exam, but a series of pop quizzes we have to pass many times each day.

Mary had destructive demons in her life ... the medications she needed destroyed her vision and her health...and her disease robbed her of many relationships and joy she might have otherwise known. She was blessed to have those people in her life that let her know she was loved and that she was lovely. She led a life of quiet desperation...but in that life taught many of us the important lessons we needed to learn.

One day, many months ago, as John and Ruth and Judy and I sat with Mary, she asked to have the pictures of her grandchildren and Jim and Judy handed to her. She clutched them to her breast, and smiling, went to sleep. That is the way I will always remember her.

March 2008