

Janice Louise Styer 1933-2017

My mother was born to be a nurse. She worked part time for a number of years at Evangelical Hospital, and when I was getting service hours for Boy Scout, I worked as a candy striper. Since everyone knew and loved my mom, I was treated royally by the staff and nurses. Later my mom worked at the Laurelton State School and Hospital, and again everyone treated my royally because of my mom. At one point in time the state social work system decided that the mentally retarded should be treated as adults and not as children. Typical of state bureaucracy, this got interpreted to mean that the residents could not play with "age-inappropriate toys". One of the oldest residents had a teddy bear that he slept with and carried with him everywhere. The social workers took his teddy bear away, and my mom protested vehemently. She kept protesting for days, until one day she found an article in Guideposts with a scientific study on how teddy bears can benefit the health of senior citizens. She took this to the doctor and got the doctor to write a prescription for a teddy bear for the senior resident, who then finally got his teddy bear back.

One of her favorite patients was a microcephalic (I forget his name but let's call him Johnny); the young boy needed to have every limb moved to keep it healthy and his body rotated to avoid bed sores. I thought Johnny was the epitome of a nonresponsive "vegetable". But my mom claimed, and one of the staff corroborated, that when Mom walked in and greeted him, his eyelids would flutter a little, so he could respond to love. Years later, Mom told me with tears in her eyes how a staff member had one day grossly neglected the then teenaged Johnny and he died. She grieved the loss of a person whom others might have not even considered worthy of calling alive.

After my mom retired, she and Dad took the motor home down to Texas each winter to the Escapees RV Club headquarters to see Aunt Joyce and Uncle Hank. Mom volunteered as a nurse in their assisted care facility; even in retirement she could not stop nursing.

Every year the neighbor Gates family butchered a hog and brought us meat. One year their son Mike Gates brought a big pan of pork, and after playing with us in the afternoon Mike stayed for the meal. During the meal Mike mentioned that this meat came from Sally the hog, at which point Mom stopped eating it. She said she refused to eat meat that she knew by name!

Growing up in hunting country, all my brothers loved shooting. One day we were throwing a glass bottle in the air and trying to shoot it with a 22. At some point Mom came out and watched us, then teased us about being bad shots. We said she could not do any better, at which point she accepted our challenge. We threw the bottle up, Mom shot, and the bottle shattered. We were stunned, and told her to do it again. She said she had a 100% success rate and did not need to improve on that.

Education mattered a lot to my mom. When we were little, each son had a savings account to save money for college. There was never any question that we would go to college. In high school Mom sometimes would mention to me that the Sunbury hospital was offering full college tuition to anyone who would become a doctor and work there, so she probably was disappointed that I did not become a doctor, but she was still very proud of all the academic achievements of her children.

Mom was a romantic at heart. She read lots of Gene Stratton-Porter and Grace Livingston Hill and similar novels. One of the highlights of their trip to Israel was when Mom and Dad celebrated a renewal marriage ceremony in Cana of Galilee. She mentioned that ceremony pretty often so it must have

meant a lot to her (even though my dad was not overtly romantic; he would tease Mom by saying “I told you when we got married that I loved you, and if I change my mind, I will let you know.”)

Mom loved family. We went to every family reunion. On almost every family trip we travelled to see aunts, uncles, or cousins, and perhaps see some tourist sights while there. After she had grandkids, she arranged a trip for all her daughters-in-law and granddaughters to visit Niagara Falls. Years later, she arranged for the whole family to take a cruise ship to the Bahamas. It is fitting she died just after Thanksgiving, because she made a big deal about seeing the whole family at Thanksgiving, and she always worked Christmas so she could get off for the Thanksgiving family reunion.

Mom sometimes mentioned how much she looked forward to seeing my sister Mary Louise in heaven. As a kid one never pays much attention to what parents do, but many years later I realized that Mom would disappear on Mary Louise’s birthday for hours, planting flowers for her grave and a nearby child’s grave. Well, now she has finally seen Mary Louise again, and I am sure they are rejoicing in heaven.