

For Mom – 11/8/14

HAVE FUN! That's a phrase my mother said, wrote, & lived.

Mom once said about her family growing up: *"All of my relatives were characters" that's why we had such fun times* and I think that held true for our family. We've had a lot fun times because we are all characters too.

Although, I didn't appreciate it at the time, every single day I'd leave for school, mom would say *"Goodbye"* but quickly follow it up with a *"have fun!"* What? Have fun at school? Is she kidding me? But she meant it.

Most of you know my mother was a fabulous pianist and some of you here today may have been privileged enough to see my mother play the piano backwards. She'd sit with her back to the piano, cross her arms behind her, strain to turn her head and look around to see if her fingers would start on the correct keys, then she'd serenade us with "Has Anybody Seen My Gal". The climax of the song was when she had to reach for one far away key...she could reach it, but she always milked it, straining. She had fun.

One would think she started playing backwards to attract attention or make herself stand out, but in reality it became a defense mechanism. She shared with me that she used to play piano for her brother Gordon, my Uncle Bud as we called him, and his friends while they played pool.

Now, I figured that was a way for her to watch them play pool and play piano at the same time, but mom said it was a necessity! If she turned around and turned her back to them she'd get hit in the back of the head with a pool ball. So she got creative and had fun at the same time.

Mom would get VERY silly with her brother Gordon and her sister, my Aunt Connie. I always enjoyed hearing about the pranks they used to pull on one another as youngsters and she loved spending time with them both later in life playing golf and yes, the occasional hand of poker. Still having fun.

Some of my Herzog and Magee cousins may recall the side of my mother

known as the "Party Animal". I believe it was best displayed at my cousin Julia's wedding in Detroit where mom danced to every dance..... even if there wasn't actually music playing. She had so much fun that weekend and it was all done completely sober - or so she said.

Fun times for my sisters and I growing up included wrapping paper tube wars. One Christmas while wrapping presents we, along with mom, started using empty cardboard wrapping tubes as swords. We had many gallant duels. There were no injuries sustained and my father even joined in the festivities briefly. However, we soon discovered the battles were exhausting and cardboard tubes don't exactly hold up after repeated poundings on your opponents head...or back....or arm...or stomach. Fun!

And how many Mother's allow their children to actually draw on the walls! Mine did. The walls of our den were a cornicopia of creativity. It started simply enough with our old, upright, five-pedal piano being moved in the den. Since it was going to stay there for a LONG time, mom let us write on the wall, knowing the piano would cover it up once it was moved.

Well, that led to more drawings around the piano, which then led to more drawings and sayings on the other walls and my sister Rhonda created a cardboard template of her foot and spray painted foot prints around the entire room, including the ceiling.

Mom loved writing clever sayings on the wall and often times, political ones. But I think she really enjoyed having visitors get creative and leave THEIR marks on the walls. It always had to be clean, no vulgarity, and everyone stuck to that rule and either simply signed their name, or wrote words of wisdom, or created some pretty spectacular artwork. We had FUN with this room and mom allowed it all to happen.

Balloons also played a large part in our lives from very early on in our childhood right up to last Christmas. From rubbing them on your hair and sticking them to the wall with the static, to endless, and I do mean ENDLESS contests to see how long we could keep a balloon in the air and not let it hit the floor. ALWAYS we had balloons at parties and almost always we

ended up having fun with them. Mom had fun with them last December as we celebrated my birthday here in Little Valley. She may not have been able to leap and reach like she used to, but she enjoyed it and participated.

Our family may not have gone to Disney World for birthday or holiday celebrations, but we certainly made our own fun and mom participated the entire way making due with what we had.

My mother not only played piano, but she taught piano, just as her own mother did. She truly loved those students who wanted to be there to learn and she taught both my sisters and I to play as well.

She accompanied many students at their music solo festivals and played piano for the school chorus. I'll bet there aren't many teenage girls whose classmates tell them their mom is "cool" and really mean it! Mine did.

I think once mom stopped teaching piano and got more involved with the theater community by accompanying their musicals, she came out of her shell and really started to enjoy life and meeting people. Theater people are just her kind of folks: creative, talented, and....fun!

My favorite memory with my mom was a day spent in New York City. We went with a few members of The Village Players theater group and although we had dinner plans that night, we had the first part of the day and afternoon to ourselves. So, Mom and I took advantage and explored the big city on our own.

She loved New York City and often said she could live there, which always took me by surprise being from a country road near Bradford, PA and the bustling metropolis of Little Valley. But she really did.

We took a walk first thing in the morning on some streets we probably should NOT have been on, then we took a harrowing cab ride to 5th Avenue and walked into every store we couldn't afford one thing in and loved it! We took

a horse and carriage ride in Central Park, and went to two museums where mom promptly set off security by stepping over a roped-in area by an Egyptian statue.

Then after meeting up with the rest of the group for dinner at Mama Leone's, we saw a play. Unfortunately, I cannot remember which play it was during that trip. We made several trips for a few years, but I know we enjoyed it. After the show, a spur-of-the-moment limo ride, and a short walk to the hotel, we entered the lobby where there was a grand piano being played by one of the bell boys. Mom kind of pushed her way onto the piano bench and began playing the tango as a few of us danced in the lobby. She finally got to say she played piano in NYC!

The entire day was completely spontaneous, right up to the last note, and I'm so happy I got to spend that day with my mom. We had fun!

When Jenny, and then Ian, came along it gave mom another generation to have fun with and I know they gave her a new lease on life and a reason for getting up each day. The balloon games continued at each celebration and mom would carry Tic Tacs in almost every pocket to reward good deeds. Jenny's devotion to mom the last 9 months, were a great comfort to her (and me), even though Jenny was still hurting with the loss of her own mom. I can see my mom's influence on Jenny because of how she raised Rhonda. Three generations of fun girls!

Several years ago, my husband Dave and I gave mom a book called **Your Story: A Guided Interview Through your Personal and Family History** where it asks a person to fill in answers to some probing questions about one's life. It's a wonderful way for future generations to learn about their ancestors and know a little bit more about where they come from. Mom, for the most part, took it seriously and wrote in her answers between 2004 and 2005 for us.

One of the questions was: **If you had it to do over again, what would you change about the way you parented your children.** My mother's answer: *"More spanking, more shaking up, more dishes to do!"* Then she added: *"Yes, I'm kidding!"*

Another question: **What do you believe happens to people after they die?** Her response: *"I believe that our souls pass over to another plane. I believe in Reincarnation. We can choose to come back and help a loved one. I will be back!"* So....just sayin'.

My mom always told my sisters and I that she wanted Dixieland music at her funeral. We'd laugh, but then she would quickly point out she was serious. She said she didn't want people to be sad, but be happy. So, when you hear "When The Saints Go Marching In" at close of the service today, that's from Mom and FOR Mom. Feel free to dance if you want. Have fun!

While going through some of the things in mom's apartment, I ran across an index card where she had written:

"My Motto:

Be happy with what you have. Treat everyone well.

Live a good life. It isn't about material things; it's about love."

Not many people can actually say they live by their motto, but I truly think my mother did.

In 2012, my sister Dori was under tremendous pain due to a back injury and she had finally been instructed to stop working. Mom herself was still recovering from breaking her pelvis, so she wasn't feeling that great either. Dori and mom would speak daily on the phone and after sharing their aches and pains with one another, the only thing the two of them could say to make each other feel better was "I still love you!". Even though they couldn't do anything to help each other's pain, they still had their love.

After Dori died, mom continued to say it to Rhonda and I on the phone. I confided in Rhonda it made me sad to hear her say it because it was "their

thing" between Dori and Mom. But Rhonda said she knew it made Mom happy, so we continued to say it to each other....and we continued to say it after Rhonda died. However, a week or so prior to her death, mom started saying *"I still love you...no matter where you are"*. That second part was new.

I found another index card that mom wrote in her apartment. I believe this may have been written down after Dori's death, but it could have been written down after Rhonda's death....it truly doesn't matter. I think it's fitting for mom's service to read it out loud.

"Remember when the sun rises tomorrow we will be reminded that life is more than what we know – sometime's even more than what we can bear. But life is also eternal. What she did while the sun was out will last with us forever.

Message for all of you: - Have fun and laugh a lot!"

I still love you, Mom!