

Aunt Laura Jean Eulogy 2019-01-26 by William Moore

How well do we know ourselves?

How well can we know someone else?

How can we measure a life?

King Solomon told us that when we are born, our reputation is unknown and we are proven when we die.

When we look up at a clear night sky we see stars. And as we look into the dark, we see even more stars.

Aunt Laura Jean is like that. The better we know her, the more she shines.

In fact, she shines like a lighthouse, a beacon of positivity that shows us how to live.

Aunt Laura Jean is many things and has many roles:

Human, christian, woman, daughter, sister, sweetheart and wife, mother, aunt, grandmother, master bridge player, teacher, horseback rider, writer, musician, honors graduate, sorority member, singer, seamstress and knitter, chef, historian - among lots of other roles.

She was born at a time when people still rode horseback. Electricity and telephones were relatively new. It was during prohibition and women had recently gotten the right to vote.

Her life traveled through a most remarkable time in history:

She lived through the Great depression and WWII. Also the rise of technology ranging from automobiles and radio, air travel, the atomic age, the space age and to the information age.

I met Aunt Laura Jean at Bob and Dorothy's house. I had just played chess with Bob and was escaping to the kitchen when I met Aunt Laura Jean near the doorway with a platter of cookies. Well, I never met a cookie that I did not like but Aunt Laura Jean had a smile on her face which completely disarmed me. She always knows what to say and do.

Even though Aunt Laura Jean did not drink alcohol, she was very accepting of other points of view. When Cherry and I were getting married, she had Cherry pick out crystal stemware and glassware as a gift. Another time, at a family get together, I walked in with a couple of bottles and Aunt Laura Jean looked at me without saying anything at first. When I asked about it, it was explained to me that someone who would be attending the party would find it a temptation so we hid the bottles. You see, it was her love of family that drove these values, and that was uplifting - a great example of how to help others.

There is no doubt that Aunt Laura Jean overcame many difficulties in life, the loss of her brother at such an early age and the loss of others. Her strength and positive thinking resulted in a resolve to never give in to despair. It was energizing. She encouraged us many times.

Sometimes she wrote us letters. There was a time when I was in pain, on pain medication and steroids. Five of my best friends had passed away in a ten month period of time. Many things were getting to be overwhelming for me. Aunt Laura Jean wrote us a letter of encouragement. It showed her love for us and family. She would simply refuse to accept giving up either for herself, or for those in her family. And I always felt I was a part of her family, never excluded. Her light shined bright for us and showed us the way and it made all of the difference.

I never thought of a card game as being a religion until I was invited to play bridge with Aunt Laura Jean, Uncle Rog and Bob one day.

About all I was good for during that game, was holding my cards in my hand. The three of them already knew what cards that I had. It was quite clear that I had no clue, really - at least to them. It has been said that if you walk into a room and don't know who the patsy is, you are the patsy. Well, that day I was the patsy. After the game, I asked what I could do to get better and Aunt Laura Jean said that I should read a book on Bridge. Bob went and got one off of his bookcase and gave it to me. She was being too kind to say that I stink at it, and too encouraging to say that I should not play. But it was clear to me that there was a lot more than just a hand of cards going on. They figured me out - not just the cards. It was a love of gamesmanship and fun and joy. It was suspension of disbelief of ill in the world, and I suppose, even a display of faith in the goodness of humanity.

Aunt Laura Jean shined her light brightly when she wrote. She wrote memories, letters and all manner of things. She wrote about going to the Oregon State Homecoming of 1940. It shows her love of life and the exuberance she experienced when she got her first corsage. She and I had discussed on several occasions about collaborating on writing a story about how she and Uncle Rog came to be in Waitsburg. I wanted to write a work of fiction about how a small town colluded to trap a doctor. Aunt Laura Jean wanted to tell the truth. So we agreed to tell the truth but we never got the chance to write it.

I remember my first trip to Waitsburg and we went to Aunt Laura Jean and Uncle Rog's place. It was a cold day and the house was warm and you could smell the turkey roasting. She had been cooking a wonderful meal for us. There was tennis on the T.V. and we were shown where we could sleep. It was all about hospitality and sharing and good times. Aunt Laura Jean and Uncle Rog took us to go see the play, "Annie get your gun". I remember Aunt Laura Jean's laughter during the play.

She loved music. And singing and playing her keyboard. Every family get together was an opportunity to get everyone together and sing the family songs from a songbook that Aunt Laura Jean put together.

In one of my last conversations with Aunt Laura Jean, we discussed the purpose of life but she never told us how to live our lives. When I wrote this, I had trouble deciding on whether to use past tense or present tense because her light is still with us and with her light, she showed us how to live.