

Eulogy for Jean Ward Phelps, offered by Wendy Ward on December 15, 2023

Jean: Daughter, Sister, Sister-in-law, Wife, Mother, Mother-in-law, Grandmother, Great-grandmother, Aunt, Friend, Neighbor, Sponsor, Parishioner, World Traveler. Just a few of the words you could use to describe Jean Neilson Galloway Ward Phelps.

A few of the things we will remember about Mom:

Perfume –Joy by Jean Patou,

Lipstick - Sugar Poppy by Revlon. That perfect shade of pink.

Songs – anything by Johnny Cash or Frank Sinatra. Of course, one of her favorite songs was “Jean” by Rod McKuen.

Cheese and Ice Cream – one she hated, one she loved. If you knew Mom, you knew she hated cheese. Period. Any kind. It didn’t matter, and don’t try to convince her otherwise. If you knew Mom, you knew she loved ice cream. Whether from Bob Hoffman’s in Spring Lake, or Breyer’s from the fridge. Cup, cone, frozen Snickers ice cream bar, she pretty much liked them all.

Beach - Mom loved warm weather, warm water and sunshine. Oh, how she hated the Northeast winters and would look for every excuse to escape. While she preferred a beach (Sea Girt or the USVI being her preference), a pool or lake would do (especially if there was a certain Mountain Lakes lifeguard on duty). Mom loved nothing better than to do “floaty-floaty”, which was listening to a book on tape while on a float in the pool, Caffeine Free Diet Coke close by.

Cooking – while she got tired of cooking in her later years (as she said, she’d been doing it for over 60 years), Mom loved cooking and entertaining. Yes - she enjoyed dining out, however, as my nephew Dan once said, “Grammy, you are a good cooker”. My parents were great entertainers, and often hosted dinner parties. Beef Bourguignon, Duck ala Orange, Forgotten Torte – mom would comb her cookbooks and magazines. You would find her in the kitchen, with a bag of potato chips, reading her way through Bon Appetit or Gourmet, as she planned her menu. When we lived in California, she took Chinese cooking classes (no cheese there) and Egg Rolls, Shrimp Toast, Beef with Broccoli and Lo Mein made it into her repertoire. She even made my dad go to Chinatown to buy a rice cooker and the proper brand of sticky rice. When Cindy and I were in Girl Scouts, she usually provided a cooking class as one of our badge assignments. Once Mom moved to Greensboro, she and Ed hosted many a “foyer group” as part of the St. Andrew’s congregation. Mom was always in charge of the Yorkshire Pudding on Christmas Eve (including one evening when she managed to bake one of the charms of her charm bracelet into the pudding). We will try to do her proud this year – maybe minus the charm.

Math – Mom liked to say she was allergic to math. Yet, she loved puzzles (not the jigsaw puzzles that Ed loves), but crossword puzzles, sudoku, Candy Crush. Mom was an excellent bridge player – she started playing in college. There were times when she belonged to two bridge clubs at a time and organized many bridge luncheon fundraisers over the years. I think it was like cheese – she just didn’t like math.

Knitting - My mom learned to knit while she was at Greenbrier. I can remember growing up, where we would spend every summer in Sea Girt (no matter where we lived). One of the first stops of the summer was to the knitting and needlework store, where Mom would pick up her projects for the summer – sweaters, blankets, needlepoint purses. All of her grandchildren received a blanket made up

of their college colors before they set off for their freshman year. Mom would spend hours knitting for the St. Andrew's winter bazaar – booties, headbands, scarves. It was a labor of love.

Travel - Mom loved to travel. You didn't need to tell her where – she had already packed her bags and was up for the adventure. When we lived in California, we traveled from Tijuana to Seattle. Mom and my Dad traveled extensively through Europe. When she was single, before she married Ed, Mom continued to travel on Girls trips with friends, and with Cindy and me for the occasional spa weekend as well as traveling to family weddings and reunions. Mom and Ed took cruises to the Caribbean and up to Nova Scotia. In addition, there was many a road trip as they traveled up and down the Eastern Seaboard visiting friends and family.

Humor - Mom loved to laugh and I'm sure everyone in this church shared a funny story and laugh with her, and has their favorite "Jean story". My sister, Mom and I would often break into fits of giggles – usually at the most inopportune times – such as when we managed to knock over every glass of water on the table at the Williamsburg Inn, or when Mom and Cindy were sitting, laughing uncontrollably, on a wall in a remote English town, much to the confusion of the townspeople (silly Americans), or when Mom narrowly averted disaster by not running her moped into Hamilton harbor in Bermuda, only to forget to put down the kickstand and knock every moped down like dominos. Just reminiscing about those stories could elicit repeat fits of laughter, until the tears streamed down our faces.

Faith – Mom took great solace in her faith and it comforted her through many of life's adversities. She was responsible for our religious upbringing. From St. Peter's to St. John's to St. Stephen's to St. Mark's to St. Uriel's and now St. Andrew's, Mom found her spiritual home.

Family - Mom loved her family and was tremendously proud of both past and future generations – just ask Mom or Ed about their grandchildren! She and Ed loved to reminisce about their days in Mountain Lakes and the antics of my uncles, and while Ed is the genealogist, Mom welcomed learning more about her family history, both across the United States and in Scotland. Her birthday twin is my niece Elizabeth. Elizabeth was born on Mom's 55th birthday and as Mom said, was her best birthday gift ever!

Friends – Mom had friends across the United States and around the world, met through her various moves, organizations and travels. Gracious and welcoming, Mom could easily find a topic or share a story to put people at ease. Mom so enjoyed her lunches with her "Diva's" group. While Mom loved being the center of attention, she was also comfortable sharing the spotlight. Mom recently celebrated 40 years of sobriety. She was proud of her recovery (as were we) and while I don't know much – Mom respected the anonymity of her friends in recovery – I know that she was a friend, counselor, confidante and attitude adjuster to many.

Ed Phelps – they met and fell in love as teenagers, until as Mom put it, "he dumped her" to go off to college. 50 years later they reconnected, and it was love at second sight. Ed and Mom were two peas in a pod, the perfect complement to each other, and had a wonderful love story. It is only fitting that he was her first and last love.

Jean loved life – she loved her family, her friends and her "family". Mom lived 85 great years – and a few crummy weeks. She had two great loves, was proud of, and adored by, her family, traveled the world and had few regrets. I hope someday I can say the same.

We love you mom, and as we've said many a time, thank you (and God bless you) for bringing Mr. Phelps into our lives.