

Our Family Links

The Groberg/Holbrook Family History Association Newsletter Issue 26, Spring 2019

Mary Jane Groberg Fritzen

1931—2019

Excerpts from Anny and Rosie's talks from the funeral for Mary Jane Fritzen. February 16, 2019. Full transcripts available on request.

Several years ago, Anny (Case) and Emily (Ballard) visited an amazing greenhouse, filled with plants from all over the world. Delighting in the varying shapes, sizes, and colors, Emily declared, "Who knew there were so many ways to be a leaf!" Similarly, when we think about our mom, we are reminded that there are so many ways to "be." Mary Jane could be rigid and inflexible, but she also allowed us a great deal of unsupervised time as children to do or create whatever we wanted. In some areas, she saw the world in black and white terms, but she was also very capable of seeing nuance, and she resisted the politics of polarization. She demanded a lot from others, but also gave freely. In short, she was a very complex woman who didn't fit into any mold. She was not a generic leaf.

Mom believed in living each day with purpose. She made daily to-do lists and actually followed them. Whenever she visited us, she came with a "to-do" list as well. We would visit, but mostly she was checking off her list with her grandchildren, telling them family history stories, reading aloud with them from *The Friend*. Even though my mom was very precise, people were the most important things to her. Her to-do list was often left unfinished because she was out helping someone. She didn't care one whit about someone's looks, background, means, or educational level. Her job was to be nice.

Our mother was also an accomplished re-gifter. If she wasn't going to use a gift she was sure someone else would use, she would pass it on. Her most popular gifts to newlyweds were thank-you notes and stamps. Every thing, she thought, should have a purpose. Her leftover habits were also legendary. Whether a tablespoon or a quart of something remained, she'd save it. More remarkably, she'd actually use it! She had zero regard for expiration dates and her home is filled with vintage food and spices.



The Fritzens

More important than preserving food was her preservation of historical and family records. As a genealogist, she worked to get rid of duplicate records, making sure dates and names were correct. She was instrumental in the production of a number of substantial family history books and resisted the allure of creating genealogical records that weren't accurately sourced. She checked and re-checked facts and details, and she always sought out primary sources.

Like her own mother, she looked to unchanging values, sure principles, and divine revelation, to determine her priorities, how she spent her time, and her positions on issues. Although she may have been considered politically active, principles, not politics or popular opinion guided her stance on the issues of the day. She considered each issue on its own merits, lined it up against her principles, and then took a position. When an initiative went before the voters to authorize the instigation of a state-sponsored lottery, she quickly recognized this as a form of gambling, and

gambling went against her principles. She worked night and day, to defeat the lottery. While it may have seemed she was fighting an uphill battle, to her, it wasn't as much about the outcome as it was about taking a principled position.

"Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good." (D&C 90:24). We'd often find mother in prayer -- not just at night or in the morning, but any time of day. When she approached the last weeks of her life, kneeling became increasingly difficult. Still, she insisted on kneeling and placed a small pillow under her knees to make it a little easier. In one of her final prayers uttered aloud, mother said, "Help us to keep praying and always believe in prayer." Even after more than 80 years of cultivating a consistent practice of prayer, there was still a real need for faith.

From her, we learned what it really means to endure to the end. Professional failure, broken relationships, unfulfilled expectations, the untimely death of a spouse: Her tremendous success did not come in spite of these obstacles, but because she faced them head-on. Throughout her life, she never stopped living. She never stopped learning. She never stopped evolving. Just last spring she planted a new type of flowering bush in her garden. "At last," she said, "I'll finally get the little flower garden I've always wanted." We thought "Mom, you're not going to be alive to see this plant grow." But that reality was not part of her thinking. She was too busy growing things to contemplate death.

Our mother truly lived a purposeful life, centered on other people, with faith, precision, and love. She is a witness to the reality of the Savior's mission: "He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isaiah 61).



Mary Jane with her children, grandchildren and in-laws.

Memories of Mary Jane

Julia

In July of 1944 or 45 the Church held an MIA Conference. It included a big dance festival and general gatherings in the SLC Tabernacle. Among other things, this huge gathering included a Testimony Meeting. I attended with Mary Jane, Mother and Grandma Holbrook. When the Testimony meeting was opened, one of the first to stand was Grandma Holbrook. As I recall, she mentioned that her father, George H. Brimhall had been an enthusiastic supporter of the YMMIA and YWMIA programs. Shortly after Grandma Holbrook's testimony, Mary Jane stood up and bore her testimony. She never hesitated to stand and express her faith. She was very BRAVE! Some people are naturally courageous. Mary was.*

John

I was always proud of my big sister Mary Jane. I remember going to high school band concerts when the band played "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The trumpets and trombones would blare out their parts with great gusto then suddenly, above all the fanfare, a high-pitched piccolo would ring out over them all and I would turn to my friends and proudly say, "That's my sister Mary Jane!" Mary Jane stood out in many other ways and was heard for good by many people over many years. Some of her trials are known to us, but many others are known only to her and to God. Whatever they were, she endured them well. She was true and faithful to the end, so the Lord will "delight to honor her." (Doctrine and Covenants 76:5)



"Look to the Light" One of our favorite photos of Mary Jane showing her positive influence on our Bailey grandchildren.

David

Mary Jane wanted to be helpful. She lived with Grandpa Holbrook and was a big help to him after Grandma Holbrook died. Our little family increased to four children while we lived in Salt Lake City. When I took Lorraine to the hospital for the birth of our fourth child, Heather, Mary came to our home near Liberty Park and watched the three children while I stayed in the hospital with Lorraine and baby Heather. She was available as a helper not just for me and Grandpa Holbrook but for all of her family and many others. She helped care for Dad after Mom died, she helped Dad write the Idaho Falls Temple book, she helped with and wrote many local history, genealogy and family documents.



Mary Jane and Julia at the ocean, 1948.

Richard

(excerpt from an Idaho Day Patriot essay written by my grandson Ty Groberg)

Aunt Mary Jane can be found caring for others, going into action, writing letters, attending workshops, supporting her family and giving of her time. I have gone to her home and played in her garden, but I had no idea what a neat lady she was until I thought to write about her for Idaho Day. She works quietly behind the scenes and doesn't care who gets the credit. By all accounts she truly cares about her community and takes action when appropriate, making her an unsung hero, who I consider the Ultimate Patriot.



Mary Jane, John and Jean, David, Dick and others at BYU.

Dee

I wanted to share a memory about how Mary applied a concept I had taught at our sibling reunion in 2016. It was a concept about communicating effectively with others and how to resist the feeling of getting angry at others, even when you feel you have been offended. A couple of months after the reunion, Mary emailed me an example of how she had applied this concept successfully when she became aware of a contention brewing between the home owners and the management of her condo complex. She was able to resolve the conflict peacefully using what she had learned. I was so proud of her and grateful for her sharing the story with me. If anyone would like the full story, let me know and I'll send it to you.



Mary Jane hiking in Bone, Idaho.

Joe

On Saturday, July 7, 2018, Joe and Jeanne took Mary Jane to Camp Cumorah in Bone, Idaho, to see the wildflowers. Mary walked the trail with ease, stepping easily over fallen branches and cow pies, and asked the names of flowers and trees with sincere curiosity. She loved to be in the woods, and she loved walking and learning and remembering similar experiences in her past. Her ever-inquisitive mind, her “can-do” optimism, and her unfailing expressions of gratitude always inspire us to be more like her.



Julia, Mary, David and John playing music.

Beth

The flute and the piano: Mary was the soloist and I the accompanist. I remember the “informal times” the best - in her home in Linden park. We would figure out which classical flute songs she liked that I could also play, then struggle through the first couple of attempts. We would finally get that song good, then go on to the next challenge. There was no formal audience, (occasionally Barry), just 2 musicians/sisters having a good, musically challenging time together.

Lewis

Mary Jane and I had similar interests. We both liked to write columns and opinion pieces in newspapers. She was a highly skilled editor and her wordsmith skills were valued. She was my adult life editor. The past 45 years Mary has kept in touch with me wherever I lived. It was mostly through regular mail. She sent newspaper clippings, articles she wrote, obituaries, birthday cards, outlines of talks she was going to give. She used me as a sounding board, as audience critiquing her talks. While I lived in Idaho Falls, she let me be the listener as she practiced her talks. When I lived away, she would give talks on the phone. She would always invite me to visit Idaho Falls during 4th of July activities.

Mary Jane was the Magic Carpet, I was Aladdin, and Oh what a ride we had.



Mary Jane and Lewis boarding the ruby princess, Sept. 2018

Gloria

The last time we visited Mary was on February 4, 2019. She shared with us that she didn't think she had accomplished much in her life. I respectfully disagreed, mentioning in particular all the family history books she had written, helped compile or edited. I then brought up Family Tree on my cell phone and showed her several posts from different individuals, each referencing the source as a book she had compiled, written or edited. I explained that because of what she has written, my son (who shares an ancestral name), for example, will now be able to share important information with his son (who also shares an ancestral name), which will help them both get to know their ancestors. And that's only the start, as each generation shares with the next generation, which they will be able to do because of what she has written. How many people can say they accomplished something that has such a lasting effect!

George

Over the years she was always concerned that she did not have the best relationship with her family. She thrived on those relationships when they were felt, and she missed them enormously when they were not felt. Jane Eyre is next to the Standard Works in our home and I will draw from it. When Rochester is trying to promise to Jane the gift that would make her most happy. He suggests many expensive worldly items. After she has declined everything Rochester asks her, "Then what?" She replies, I just want your regard. That is what Mary wanted. She thrived on having our regard.

Mary was able to think independently and could see through biases and could arrive at what she believed was the



Groberg children celebrating the 80th anniversary of their parents wedding. Mexico, 2010.

truth of an issue despite the spin that others tried to put on it. She confided in me that sometimes she patiently listened to someone try to convince her of why they were correct. Sometimes it was a family member or friend whom she did not want to offend. So, she would listen and then tell me what she thought and how it differed from how they thought.

*For space reasons we had to edit these shared memories. Copies of all of the complete versions are available on request. Please contact Tom Groberg if you would like them

Editors Note

We invite you to make tax-deductible contributions to the Groberg-Holbrook Genealogy Association.

Please send your contributions to:
Groberg-Holbrook Genealogy Organization
1605 S. Woodruff Ave.
Idaho Falls, ID 83404
or via PayPal to dvgroberg@gmail.com. You can pay for the cabin with PayPal also.

Family Videos and Photos

I have created a page on YouTube where I have been uploading family history videos. To find the channel, search for DV Groberg on YouTube.

Please everybody subscribe to the channel and hit the notification bell so you will know when new videos have been uploaded.

I will also be uploading more photos to the website as well. If anyone of you has photos or videos from reunions or anything family history related, please send them to me. I will get them digitized and uploaded. Feel free to call or email me with questions.

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