

Our Family Links

The Groberg/Holbrook Family History Association Newsletter

Issue 29, Fall 2020

Julia Gay Groberg Blair

1932—2020

[For space, we had to edit. Complete versions available on request.]

Carol:

I remember crawling into bed with my mom until I was nearly a teenager. Falling asleep with her arm around me was the most peaceful way to go to sleep. Any bad dreams I may have didn't stand a chance, because there was nothing to fear when I was with my mom. When I was 5, I was chosen as the only child to go to China. She clarified it was because I was the favorite not just the one who cried the most. She was good at making me feel good – a talent that is natural to her. I always felt that I was loved by my mom even though I'm sure I didn't always please her. I remember once begging my dad not to make me stay at school in China. He gave me the choice of staying in school or going home and getting spanked. I chose to go home, knowing my mom was there and would save me. I don't remember if I got spanked, I do remember running into her arms. Her arms were a place where I expected and received mercy.

Ben:

As I have reflected on my memories of Mom, there aren't many moments

that stand out as exceptional, and what's more, it's not the rare moment that captures her influence. If childhood moments with Dad were punctuation marks, experiences with Mom were the content, the plot, and the words. Mom's influence was the air: How to pick a moment from the hundreds? As I have thought about Mom, I have been astounded at what we put on mothers. Mom did not embrace domestic life. She did not keep an organized, uncluttered well-regimented home, she did not love cooking and often felt like she wasn't measuring up. But she did have some clever coping mechanisms. Her presence has been the constant in my life. What was truly exceptional in my childhood, and today, is her absence.

Jim:

I've been going through letters she sent me on my mission—2 binders full. The first story is familiar; It's Grandpa Groberg, who at age 3 lost his parents. At age 4 he would climb up into an apple tree so he could be close to them. He always felt their presence. He always felt close to them. I think that deep bedrock faith grandpa had, not a kind that you explain in a testimony or essay,



but a kind that was just part of who he was, got passed to mom. I know that from a prayer she offered on my behalf. It was when I was first born. She had toxemia which made her go blind. There were some complications with me as well. She offered a prayer that was more than a prayer—it was a covenant, "Please let me see my boy and I promise I will raise him unto you." In her passing I suddenly feel that wave and realization that it has been there, has saved me, has given me my tail wind. I want to live up to the covenant she made so she can know forever more how grateful I am for the faith she wanted to pass on to me.

Lisa:

When my mom was 3, she was looking up at her dad with big eyes and said, "Daddy, daddy, there's a person in your eyes." Grandpa looked down at her and said, "Well who is it, Julia?" My mom looked up at him and said, "Oh, my. It's me!" Grandpa said something like, "Oh, Julia, you will always be an apple in my eyes." And she was. My mom knew her dad loved her. She knew her mom loved her. One of my strongest memories was in 6th grade. I was playing kickball when someone cheated and I hit her. It became a full-fledged fight. I remember whistles and some lady pushing us apart, sud-





Blair Family, 1958

denly I was mortified—what had I done, who was I? When school ended, I ran home, and there was mom. I ran into her, held her and bawled. I said, “mom, mom—” and told her everything. She held me, loved me, listened to me. Never said anything like, “You know better than that, Lisa.” She just was present. I don’t ever remember being disciplined by my mom. She just loved.

Jen:

My mother brought me up to believe in a loving God to whom I could pray for help and support. I believe this to be true. But his intervention, his ample arm to lean upon, has never been some magical or paranormal presence. More often than not, it has been my angel mother, Julia Blair. The word I would use to describe her is gracious. A gracious woman, a gracious hostess, a gracious mother. In Jr. high, a teacher of mine mentioned how happy and smiley my mom was and asked if that was how she was at home. “Yes,” I said, “That is my mother.” No pretense. She was a joyful, kind and gracious woman. I see God’s grace most prevalent in my life through the gift of a wonderful family and a wonderful mother. I feel so blessed and so grateful to have Julia Blair as my mother.

Bob:

Mom gave me many gifts. One of them is the love of people. And her belief that she passed on is that people are basically good. Strangers were just friends you haven’t yet met. People were always welcome in our home. I don’t remember doors being locked. People would come in and there was a sense that you are always welcome no matter who you are. Some of the greatest gifts

Mom gave were the gift of love; the gift of charity; the gift of service. When I was growing up, our house was not always clean. Something my mom put up on the fridge was: “Leave things better than you found them.” Mom loved music. One of the musicals she really liked was Camelot. A line from that is: “We are less than a drop in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea.” We’re nothing, just this little drop. In response, another character responds: “But some of those drops do sparkle, they do sparkle.” Julia, my mother, sparkled.

Margaret:

I can imagine as we were all together in heaven that mom said, “I’m so excited to go!” and that she leapt off into a magnificent adventure with, as all of us, no idea that it would require instruments, training, frustration and practice. I remember the various vehicles we had. As we changed cars over the years we had to be sure that the cars could accommodate wheelchairs. We had to take dad to dialysis and mom to doctor’s appointments. Dell usually was the person who took them around. I doubt any of us had any sense of what the life experience was actually going to be: The heart breaks, the difficulties and the joys by contrast are the magnificent flowers that can feel like a bit of a wilderness sometimes. The fact that we learned to love each other, to take care of each other, to rescue each other, to celebrate each other, is the legacy that we have as members of the Blair family.

Dell:

Dell wrapped the funeral up with the question, What’s going on?



Julia Gay, 1940.

Missionaries

President & Sister Teuscher
New York North Mission
[July 2018 — July 2021]

Elder Isaac Teuscher
Iowa City, Iowa
isaac.teuscher@missionary.org
[June 2019 — June 2021]

Elder Seth Bailey
Mexico Cancun/Albuquerque NM
bailey.seth@missionary.org
[July 2019 — July 2021]

Elder Ethan Groberg
Nuku’alofa Tonga/Arcadia CA
ethan.groberg@missionary.org
[August 2019 — July 2021]

Sister Eden Blaser
Little Rock, Arkansas
eden.blaser@missionary.org
[September 2019 — July 2021]



Julia & Bob Blair’s 50th anniversary, Reid Ranch, UT, 2004.



John, Jean, Julia, Bob Blair, 1954.

John: I have always looked up to Julia and been proud of her many accomplishments. Together she and Bob made significant contributions to the people they loved and served, including those in Central America, China and the Baltic States. I knew Julia believed in me and trusted me to do the right thing and I tried to return that trust. When she asked me to go on a blind date with her friend Marilyn Parson's little sister, I instinctively said "no" because I had never met and knew nothing about her. Julia persisted and I said I would go because Julia would never do anything to hurt me, only to help me. What a life changing event that first blind date turned out to be. Many important events in my life involved Julia. Julia helped me and legions of others to believe in being and doing good. We all need the influence of more Julia Groberg Blairs in our lives. Her influence for good will continue forever.

David: I have only positive memories of Julia. She was a bubbly, fun, big sister. She added a feeling of freedom and happiness to our lives. She was my protector when some of the older neighbors would tease me. She would cheer me on if I got stuck wrestling a friend or foe. Although she was only four years older than me,



Boyd, David & Julia at Abraham Lincoln's home, 1948

she was expected to "baby sit" me and the younger kids. Those were always fun times for us because with Julia there was more freedom, playing, running and mischief than Mom or even Mary Jane would allow. She was beautiful, talented and popular as a student in Idaho Falls. When I became a cheerleader in my first year at IF High School, I was known as "Julia's little brother" I was always proud of her and was proud to be her little brother.

Richard: In high school, Julia had a part in the play "Arsenic and Old Lace." I was so proud of her. But when I saw it, I was really frightened because these old ladies were killing everybody! I was almost afraid of Julia. She seemed to always be honored with awards for Best Actress or Best Supporting Actress in high school and at BYU. After Julia was married with two or three little ones, she visited one of her old schoolteachers in Idaho Falls. The teacher told her that one thing she could not tolerate was parents who let their little children run wild without supervision or discipline. Julia commented afterward, with a twinkle in her eye, "that's exactly what I'm doing!" In thinking of Julia and her exceptional life, personality, and accomplishments the scripture in Proverbs 31 seems so appropriate in describing her. "Who can find a virtuous women for her price is far above rubies."

Dee: Julia was like another mom to me. She watched out for me even when she was sick, but she still kept her sense of humor. One day when I was sitting with her, she suddenly asked me if I would take off her shoes. "Of course," I replied. After a little while she looked down at my feet and said, "Take your shoe off." I asked, "Which one?" Pointing to the right she said, "That one." I obeyed. A few minutes later she looked down at my left foot and said, "And that one?" So, I took the left one off and relaxed. A few minutes more passed, and Julia looked down at my feet and said, "Put them back on now." I asked, "Why?" and Julia just



Blair Family, 1975.

smiled. I put them back on and said, "If you want me to do something like that again, next time you got to say, SIMON SAYS, first." I don't know if she understood or not but we both had a BIG laugh. She knew what she was doing! Right to the end she was playing jokes on me! I love and miss her so much!

Joseph: My first vivid memory of Julia was when she came home for the holidays with amazing friends, new songs, jokes, and wonderful insights from her BYU studies. For me, our house filled with happiness and excitement the moment she walked in. When I started BYU, I moved into one side of the upstairs bedroom at her house. Towards the end of that year I told her I had written something. She immediately sat down on the couch and asked if I would share it with her. I read a short poem-like response to the sunset I had seen as I walked back to the house that evening. She told me how beautiful a particular imagery was and asked me how I came up with it. I told her I had not seen that imagery at all and could not claim it. Without missing a beat, she said, "that is often the case, great artists often don't intend every beautiful thing they compose. It happens in spite of themselves, they can't help it." I thought: What a wonderful big sister I have!



Groberg Sibling reunion, 2018.



Julia, Beth, Bob, Bobby, Margaret, Dell, via Yucatan, 1963.

Beth: Childhood memories of Julia include sitting next to the heating vent by the piano and listening to Julia practice the violin. Listening to her dramatic readings and seeing how pleased Mom was that Julia did them so well. Being “rescued” from many teasing episodes by Julia (Until I was 8, then I was on my own!) Having Julia brush and style my hair for the important family pictures. Celebrating our birthdays together and hearing Julia say “You were my best birthday present ever”! The Summer of 2009, Barry and I were visiting with Julia and Bob and talking about our coming retirement. We had always wanted to follow Julia and Bob and go to China to teach with BYU as service missionaries. We asked them, should we go to China or serve a regular mission first? Bob thoughtfully replied: “That’s a good question...”; Julia interrupted: “Oh, go to China!” We followed her advice and enjoyed it immensely.

Lewis: Dec 7, 1941 the day of Infamy was recounted to me by both Julia and Bob as children. Julia was living in Idaho Falls – the potatoes had been harvested. The depression was loosening its grip and patriotism was sky high. Bob was just as animated as he told of his Santa Barbara experience. The detail, excitement, the amazing storytelling completely captivated me and it was as if I was transported with them and experience what they did 70+ years ago. Julia was a magical storyteller. Her stories of experiences in the Baltic’s were so exciting and interesting. The Guatemala and China stories again were captivating and kept your attention and you wondered

did that really happen? Oh my word, Julia and Bob were adventurous.

Gloria: Julia was like the glue that kept our Groberg family together. Her welcoming smile reflected her welcoming soul. No matter where we lived, visiting the Blairs always felt like a second home for us. The summer before Jon and I got married, I stayed with the Blairs. Later, before our first mission to Brazil we

stayed with the Blairs while we attended the MTC. Our stake president, who also knew the Blairs, came to set us apart for our mission. It was the closest thing we had to being set apart in our own home. Julia was someone you could talk to about anything. We loved being able to visit with her frequently during the final months of her life. After the last visit we had with Julia while she was conscious, I lovingly told her goodbye and she responded, “Leaving so soon?” I’ve often thought of those last words to me. They were so reflective of Julia – her generosity, her hospitality, and her genuine love for others. They also reflected my feelings as we knew Julia would be leaving us very soon.

George: Julia was genuinely interested in people. When visiting with her, the visitor became the center of her attention. The conversation from Julia would quickly turn to something like, “Tell me about _____. What is happening in their life?” The interest was sincere and informed. It was clear that she had been thinking about that person. The direction of her thought was never to ostracize or make a judgement. It was sincere interest in the factors of that person’s life. That approach created a natural bond between her and another human



5 Generations, DV Groberg reunion, 2003.

being. Hundreds, or even thousands of people, from a broad cross section of humankind, considered her a sincere friend and confidant. Julia was also a realist in her assessment of herself and of others, especially those who were seemingly overconfident in their opinions and perspectives. I am so grateful for her life and her influence in my life. We will always cherish her.



Bryan Groberg Stratton passed away in Bountiful, Utah on Monday, August 31 at the age of 41. In true Bryan Stratton style, he surprised us by leaving this life far too early. For those that knew Bryan, he loved to make people smile, and his heart was as big as they come. His warm disposition and engaging smile could warm anyone needing a friend, and his wit and humor was truly unmatched. Bryan had a genuine love for his family and friends.

Loved by all, Bryan has left an imprint on the lives of all those that he knew. Gone for a season, but never forgotten, we look forward to the day we can be together with Bryan again

Editors Note

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

Please mail contributions to:
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You can also contribute or make cabin payments electronically:
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