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Treasures Among Us

Mary Lou Long

Mary Lou Long was born and raised on the family farm near Lake Spring, Missouri. A few years ago, she and her husband, Kenny, returned to the farm and built a new

house. She attended school, grades 1-8, at Lake Spring School, then attended and graduated from Rolla High School. Her early years at Lake Spring prepared her well for the much larger Rolla school system.

Her sister Joan was just 16 months older than Mary Lou, but she got to go to school two years earlier. Mary Lou wanted so badly to go to school and was just devastated that she couldn't. Each afternoon when Joan got home from school, Mary Lou would insist on knowing all that Joan had learned that day. By the time she herself got to go to school, she was reading.

Her mother's father was an elder in the church in Licking, Missouri; so her family roots in the church go way back. When her mom heard that there was a small group meeting in Rolla as a Church of Christ, she and her two daughters immediately began attending. There were only about 12 people in the group at that time. She and Joan were the only two children for a while, and she describes that small congregation as, "really sweet people." Lavelle Goggin was her Bible class teacher for several years, and Allene Chaney was her teacher in grades 5-7. Both those women were very influential in her life.

Later when the congregation was meeting at 7th & State streets, she knew she wanted to be baptized before she went to high school. She and Joan and two other youths, Gene and Helen Bingham, were all baptized on a Sunday afternoon. She says, "I can safely say that I am the oldest (longest tenure) member of this congregation. This is my home church."

After graduating from Rolla High School, she went to Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg where she earned her Bachelor of Music Education degree in three years. She finished so quickly because she went to summer school each year. After graduation, she taught music education and choral music at Rolla Junior High School. Barbara King and Ron Spradling, both now members of the congregation, were among her students.

She met Kenny Long, who was coaching and teaching physical education, during the time she taught at RJHS. In 1961, theirs was the first formal wedding at the church's new building on 7th and State Streets. A select group of singers did the wedding music. Four of those singers—Tom and Lovera Baird, Tina Eudaly and Shirley Mace—are still members of the congregation.

Mary Lou taught school for two years, then opened her own piano studio in her home where she taught private piano lessons for 42 years. Among her early students were Kim Alexander and Cindy Frank. They were a joy to teach and were her students for 10 years, and both were very talented. Over the years her students included Katie McKune and her aunts, Holly and Beth McKune, as well as Chris Cassidy, Ken and Kody Waite, the Johnmeyer boys, and Marcia Giesler.

Mary Lou and Kenny have three sons—John, Mark, and Paul. After their births, she felt a strong desire to teach children's Bible classes. For over 40 years from 1965 to the early 2000's, she taught mostly grades 5-6 and VBS. Additionally, she taught ladies classes at times; and she served on the education committee for years. While

Wayne Davis was the preacher, he and Mary Lou co-taught a music class for adults. She continues to teach music classes intermittently. She and Kenny were charter members of Little Prairie Bible Camp, and she cooked during sessions when her sons were campers. All three of her sons were baptized at Little Prairie.

Several years ago, Tom Baird asked her to teach a music class for the children in the congregation. She wrote a 13-week course and taught the children to read music, how to understand the hymnal and how to conduct/direct music. At the end of the course each time, the children collaborated and wrote their own song.

When her sister Joan moved back to Rolla, she really wanted the two of them to go into business together. Mary Lou already had a good business with her private piano studio, but the opportunity came to purchase Logos Bookstore. They renamed it Lenox Books, Music & Gifts (the Lenox name was their family name). They carried books, gifts and Lenox china. Additionally, they ordered Bible class and VBS materials for their customers. They enjoyed working together, but within four years, Joan passed away from ovarian cancer.

A restaurant next to the store caught fire on a brutally cold winter night, and the water damage destroyed most of the inventory in their store. They recovered much of the Lenox China and allowed customers to buy their patterns at cost, but the store never reopened.

She loves nice dishes and really enjoys setting a pretty table. She still enjoys playing the piano, and she loves to read. She follows politics very closely, and she loves to cook and entertain. Being a music lover, there are many hymns she likes. Among her favorites are: How Great Thou Art; The Lord My Shepherd Is; Our God, He is Alive; and Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.

Mary Lou is so very thankful for family and friends. She is also thankful to be 76, healthy, active, and doing most things she wants to do. She just wants to enjoy keeping on.

NOTE: *This is the 24th in a series highlighting noble Christian women in our congregation. We truly have many "treasures among us" in the women who exemplify Christianity in all its facets and have much to teach us all.*

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What Child is This?

In November, 2014, I was privileged to attend the Rolla Ladies retreat. It was a mirror to childhood but oh so

much more, for God tells us that, unless we become like little children...

There is a special feeling when a grandchild climbs up on my lap, eager to listen to a story. There is an innocence unscarred by the world, a sense of wonderment as they explore... as they examine objects, wanting to touch, taste, and experience all that they can from their surroundings.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6. We don't really understand what it is like to be hungry or thirsty like people in other countries. But perhaps we can get a glimpse of what it would be like. When a baby cries, it is a sign of hunger... nourishment is needed to sustain life. On the same note, we need constant nourishment to maintain our spiritual lives.

I get the sense that God wants us to sincerely seek Him and all that is right as much as we can. In becoming like little children, we strive to keep that sense of awareness and wonderment of our surroundings.

Beautiful snow is falling today. God provides many nutrients and benefits from the rain and snow. As I sit here after surgery with my leg elevated, looking out at the falling snow, I'm reminded that it is when I am forced to be still, that I marvel most at His creation. We have the best conversations; I listen better. Thank you, God, for quiet times. Thank you for reminding me to be the child who can't get enough of you; your creation... to be one who explores your word... to be one who seeks to understand better, one who serves others more and desires to "sit upon your lap" while you tell the greatest stories! Stories recorded for us to share with generation after generation.

Christmas is close at hand. It is a time of wonderment for children, a time when the world thinks about Jesus. I'm thankful for that. I want to encourage each of us to share the stories. Create an atmosphere of quiet. Pick an evening of the week. No TV, radio, video games. Sit with a spouse, child, or a friend and share the stories from God's word. Create excitement, wonderment, awe, in the great book of God! Be childlike, eager to listen, as you experience all of the treasures it holds. Children are very forgiving. Pick out some character qualities you want to work on. Spend time sharing with and listening to each other. Really listening...

What child are you? Unruly? Obedient? Easily distracted? Kind? Loving? Worried? Compassionate? Patient? Forgiving? Calm? Stressed? At Peace?

In Luke 12, Jesus tells us not to worry about our life! This holiday season and always, let us strive for patience, understanding, and remaining calm in stressful situations. This Holiday season and always, may each of us be the child who stands in awe of the one who holds us in the palm of His hand.

By Connie Erisman – Rolla, MO
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Grief is the Price of Love

When our daughter, Allison, and her family moved from Nigeria, they had many items shipped to their home in Rolla. After a period of time, they learned that part of their shipment had been damaged by water. The damage included many stuffed animals that belonged to Grace, our 10-year-old granddaughter.

Dreading the moment, Allison sat down with Grace to tell her the news. To ease the blow, Allison told Grace that she can get new ones to replace the toys that are now wet, moldy and damaged. Tearful and deeply saddened by the news, Grace said to her mother, “But, Mom, I’ve loved those animals for a long time. Nobody has loved them like me.” Grace was grieved by the damage to and the loss of the toys that she truly loved.

Grief is often described as a deep sorrow or heaviness. It can create an anguish that is difficult to express in words. The more we love, the deeper the grief.

Often grief is associated with the death of someone you love, but we can experience grief from other things. It can from be debilitating injuries, divorce, issues and decisions your kids, spouse or other family members make. Individually, we can experience grief when the reality our sin hits us square in the face.

William Simmons wrote, “God is grieved when His perfect and unconditional love is rebuffed by our disobedience and sin.” Throughout scripture we see His anguished response to sin. At times we see God’s anger, frustration and divine judgment associated with grief. But we also see deep compassion and love for the sinner.

In Genesis 6:6-8 the Father is grieved because of the sinfulness of the human race. Verse 6 says that God was “grieved in His heart.” But in verse 8 (and, I think, an exciting moment for us) it says, “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.”

Isaiah 53 tells us that, *The Son of God is a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief.*

Specifically, is says in verse 10, “The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief.” Later in verse 11 it is

written, “As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many.”

There have been times I have been glad that I did not know what the future held. But God has known since the inception of His redemptive plan that His Son would suffer, bear our sins and be separated from the Holy Father. It seems to me that, although excited about redeeming His creation, God had to grieve knowing what lay ahead for His Son.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to Peter, James and John, *My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.*”

Colin Murray Parkes, a psychiatrist from the United Kingdom, wrote about grief. Part of what he said in his opening chapter of his book, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, says, “Grief is the price of love. It is the cost of commitment.”

When I first heard these words, “grief is the price of love,” I thought of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Ephesians 1:4 reminds us that we were chosen In Christ before the foundation of the world.

Our Father in Heaven knew from the beginning that we would bring Him grief and that our sin would separate us. But rather than throwing us away because we were wet, moldy, dirty and damaged, God decided to keep and redeem us through Jesus Christ. The reality is that God has loved us for a long, long time. And no one has loved us like He has.

Colin Murray Parkes expands his thoughts about grief, writing,

“Grief never ends, but it changes.

It is a passage, not a place to stay.

It is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith.

Grief is the price of love.”

©Terry Hopgood, Rolla, Missouri
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What I Have Learned in Life

In his book, “*Thing I Learned in Kindergarten*,” Robert Fulghum included the following things: share, play fair, do not hit, clean your own mess, say I’m sorry, wash your hands, flush, clean your plate (or no dessert), and take naps.

Some of my kindergarten lessons have followed me all of my life; but with the passing of years, many of my ideas

have changed. Old age has altered and refined the rules of my existence, so this is how I live my life now:

Share with others

I always alert others to bad news, my aches and pains, obituaries, surgery details, my latest medicines, helpful sleeping pills, and good laxatives

Watch your step [Ephesians 5:15—*See then that ye walk circumspectly (as you should), not as fools, but as the wise.*]

My first job as a teen was at the Chamber of Commerce in Sedalia, MO. While eating lunch with a friend, I described how the other office girls painted their nails, told dirty jokes, and did no work while the boss was out. I didn't know at that time that my recitation was overheard by the mother of one girl. I have never felt so small or mean, even though what I said was true.

Clean your plate [Matthew 6:25—*Therefore I say unto you, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.*]

My kids were always told: "Waste not, want not," and "Lots of little children are hungry." Under protest, they would clean their plates and eat my original "stew" made of leftovers from four previous meals. This, they were informed, was a "secret recipe from the old country." In my later years, I have learned that there is no reward or reason for recycling leftovers. Now, most of the time, any leftover food goes right into the garbage disposal.

Eat healthy foods [Proverbs 13:25—*The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul but the belly of the wicked shall want.*]

Our body is a temple; and we must, by all means, take proper care of it. With age, a healthy diet is somewhat different than it was in our younger years. Prune juice is excellent for "tuning us up," as are mush, strained baby foods, and liquids.

Take long naps [Proverbs 3:24—*When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid.....and thy sleep shall be sweet.*]

Sleep is very beneficial and helps restore memory. When you wake up, you are alert, and motivated. You always know exactly what to do--hurry to the bathroom!

Maintain a strong body [Ecclesiastes 9:10—*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might....*]

Keep active. Start on projects like cutting out paper dolls, or something equally useful. (I don't have to complete a project—just get started.) I frequently go to visit. I visit

my regular doctor, my urologist, my heart doctor, my podiatrist, my optometrist, my dermatologist, and anyone else I can think of. I make an effort to move from my recliner to the couch periodically. And I always hide chocolate carefully...so that I forget where it is and won't eat too much.

Avoid Shopping [Matthew 6:25—*Therefore I say unto you, "Take no thought for....your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the body more than raiment?"*]

I shop to find clothing that hides my body flab, bulges, and wrinkles. A new dress or coat is not essential, though, since my skin is only a temporary cover; and hiding my flaws does not change me. In fact, I will lose my baggy worn-out "Barbara suit" when I leave this earth. That old garment will return to dust, from whence it came; and the real spiritual me will be with God.

Be happy [Ecclesiastes 11:10—*Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.*]

The age I am now, is truly the best time of my life! I remember my secure early years, and the uncertainty I felt as a teenager. Then, as a young adult, I began to assume responsibility, which was sometimes overwhelming. Maturity brought confidence and a drive for success. Now, with all of that in the past, I can relax and be confident that I've been "over the road" and experienced it all.

I give thanks to God for long-age trials and current aches and pains. They have imparted knowledge and a desire to live fully, love eternally, and joyfully enjoy the years that remain. Old age is truly God's gift!

*I've learned...
that it is not
what I have in my life
but who I have in
my life that counts.*

©Barbara Harris, Rolla, Missouri
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