

Eleanore and Rex were from families who lived in different farming communities, one in central Iowa, Belle Plaine, and the other in southwest Iowa, Wiota.

I'm the daughter of Eleanore and Rex. My name is Mary Laura, the name my mother chose for me, her daughter, when she was a child of six. She liked the name Mary and her only sister's name was Laura. Both names were used by my family and friends throughout my years.

My parents met, were soon married and started their separate but side by side businesses, Prather Barber Shop and Prather Beauty Shop, in the 1930's, the years of the depression.

My Grandmother loaned them the \$900 to buy both side by side shops from Mr. and Mrs. Lipsett, for whom they were working. My Grandmother was the family historian. This was one story she liked to tell me; how they met when working at the shops that they soon bought with her financing the purchase and in which they did well enough to pay her back in a timely manner.

American Capitalism successfully at work. It was the depression.

I was born during these depression years. All of my growing up years, I was surrounded by this caring, hard-working family, each of whom had personal challenges and struggles as the depression was affecting their lives. They worked together with concern for each other. My Parents, Grand-Mothers and Aunts made sure I was well cared for even though each of them worked and made what they earned. While my birth into this caring family seems extraordinary, such families were common for these times.

The Depression years ushered in the Years of World War Two.

I was five when Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was attacked. My Dad brought home his new black shoes that the US Navy issued. Mom and Dad talked seriously in the living room and with great sadness; I listened. The shoes were in a small closet and when I was alone near the closet, I would open the door

and look at the shoes. In only a few days, my Dad received a US military letter which said the he had failed the medical and could not serve. Can one only imagine how my heart was lifted. So he served in our small hometown as an air raid warden and other community endeavors.

It seemed there was some way each person was doing their part to help the war effort. Some women met at the library to make and wrap bandages, care packages were gathered and sent, letters were written to the troops even though the person had never met the recipient of the letter, victory gardens were common, children brought rubber bands and tin-foil to school to be collected, we all bought war bond stamps for our US Bond Stamp Book to help finance the effort. If a hometown son or daughter returned from the military, our town had a parade, bands and all.

Our town of Glenwood is across the Missouri River from Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. Because it is the Central Command of the U S Air Force, there were so many officers that the Air Force needed more living quarters for all the enormous numbers of Officers needed there, The Hill Hotel in downtown Omaha became the quarters of these Officers.

Only a couple of blocks from the Hill Hotel is the Orpheum Theatre. This is where the best of performers, big bands, popular singers performed for the military, and for the public at the same time. Entertainers to keep the morale of our military boosted were some of the greatest.

My "historian" Grandmother lived in Omaha, she read the World Herald every day. She let me know when to take the bus from Glenwood to Omaha where Aunt Glee and Grandma would meet me at the bus station. We would walk to the beautiful Orpheum Theatre and enjoy the current bands, performing musicians and singers. The theatre was filled with the most appreciative audience a performer could wish for.

I was nine years old when the war ended. 1945

Prayers were answered.

Now to rebuild lives throughout the World.

In Glenwood, one of our hometown heroes arrived home after being released by Japan to their occupying forces of the United States. Lloyd was taken prison by the Japanese and was one of thousands who were in the Bataan Death March in the early stages of the war in the Pacific. He lived through the March; he spent the rest of the war as a prisoner in various Japanese prisons or working in their factories.

My cousin married Lloyd (In his dress Army suit) in a garden wedding at my Aunt and Uncles home. I was part of the wedding. It was such a happy time for us. Lloyd is a forever hero. He came home and became a family and business man, a friend to many, all of this despite the suffering prison effects that he endured throughout his life. Lloyd and Joan shared great joy and love in their Daughter, Debbie. Lloyd was cheerful, a ready wise councilor, an encourager. A courageous survivor of that dreadful war experience who taught us how courage and integrity are lived in real life.

Early in the year of 1945, my life as an only child was about to change. It was an ordinary day in April when my very pretty Mother left the beauty shop and we walked up the street together. She said, "Mary Laura, you are going to be a big sister. We are expecting a baby in August." I had been wishing for a brother or sister every chance I got to wish; I prayed for a brother or sister, and I had never given up hope. My sister, Cheryl's arrival brought me lasting enjoyment and appreciation. Now our family was my perfect family of four. It was good.

Yes, the World War Two was over. Our Midwest farmers were “feeding the world”, bringing farmers and leaders to learn their methods of crop and stock productivity. It was good. Victory gardens were still being planted. The rationing on what we could buy was ending on things such as sugar, flour, and other products such as gasoline. My Dad was just one of many who bought a car now that gas was available. When we were driving on the highway, if a military line of vehicles met us, the cars would voluntarily move off the road and salute, or wave, or take their hats off, or some way of showing honor and respect until they passed. Houses were in shortage for the returning military families, so new homes were being built all over the country and Glenwood too.

My adult life began when John and I were married in 1956.

Our first meeting was delightfully romantic, just the way we liked.

There he was, in his Marine Blues, recruiting, in the Student Union at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska.

He was stationed at the Naval Air Base in Lincoln after he had served two years in Japan. His company was aboard ship on its way to Korea, anticipating combat, when it was announced that the Korean War was ended, and North and South Korea will make Agreement. The ship then went to Japan instead of Korea and war. John was made sergeant while stationed in Gifu for two years. It was a valuable experience for him.

It was March when we met. John had been stationed there since the previous October. I was aware of this because his Sister Margelyn was my best friend at University of Nebraska. We were sorority sisters. I had gone home to Sidney with her for Thanksgiving. I'd heard about her Marine brother. Yet, I was not prepared to me HIM.

Marge and I walked to the Cornhusker Crib. She did not expect to see her brother there; I did not expect to see this handsome Marine. She said, "Honey, what are you doing here?" He smiled. What a smile. She introduced us. We quickly decided to go into the "Crib" where we ordered "cribs" (a brownie with scoops of vanilla ice cream on top and lavished with chocolate syrup). He teased, I laughed, Marge laughed, and we talked.

That was IT. As Marge and I walked back to the dorm, I told her, "I just met the man to be Father of my children". (This was a new thought to me) It was truth from my heart, but little did I know, how true.

Within the year, many life changes happened.

After 20 years of home and business in Glenwood, Iowa, my parents sold all to move to California and start again. Cheryl was eleven.

On New Year's Eve, John came to Glenwood. We celebrated the New Year's dining and dancing in Omaha until the music announced midnight. That's when he wonderfully proposed and I, with joyous tears, said YES. It was romantic.

We drove to Glenwood where we shared our news with friends and family. It was New Years, everyone was awake that we wanted to know.

Mom, Dad and Cheryl were very happy for us. John had their approval from the first time they met him and there was mutual approval. All of my family liked John. Cheryl, especially, who was jumping on a pogo stick when they met. John and she took turns with the pogo stick and they were fast friends from that beginning.

Their move to California was the first week of January 1956.

I returned to finish the semester at the University of Nebraska. John returned to the Lincoln Naval Air Base.

In February, I took the train from Omaha to Los Angeles to join my family.

Later in February, John was honorably discharged after 3 years of service. He moved to Denver.

We stayed in close long-distance touch through letters and expensive phone calls.

In April 1956, we were married by Father Douglas Stuart, Dean, in the Church of the Holy Nativity in Westchester, California.

What a life we had just begun as One.

Five years later, 1961, my husband graduated from the University of Nebraska, College of Medicine in Omaha. He graduated in the upper third of his class. His parents were there; my aunts, uncle, Grandmother, our twin baby daughters and I together shared our pride with John's completion of medical school.

John and I, with our twin baby girls, moved to the Northwest for John's internship and residency in Spokane.

Family times were fulfilling times. From 1960 through 1969 our children were born. We were not prepared but we were ready for them to come into our lives.

In 1960 our twins, Amy and Beth were born in Omaha.

In 1962 David was born in Spokane.

In 1965 our twins, James and John were born in Denver.

In 1969 Dan was born in Albuquerque.

We were blessed with our six children, my husband in medical practice and myself, housewife and Mother. Words could never express the love we shared and experienced over the years in our home. We all just know it in our hearts.

It may sound peculiar to say our Fifty-Four Years of marriage seemed to pass too soon; it did.

What a life we shared as One.

As a widow of nine years, I continue with how we began, with family. It is a growing family of individuals who I consider admirable, unique, talented, gifted and each with their own calling on their lives. It is just amazing to be this age and to see each one grow up and become the adult they are meant to be. Each of their lives are wonderfully awesome and I want to be with each of them.

Here is how it adds up in the beginning of 2019. We have six children and their spouses, eighteen grandchildren of whom six have spouses, eight great-grandchildren. Don't you agree that our lives (as adults) began at our marriage.

Generation after Generation. All Thanks and Praise be to God.