

Eulogy for Jean F. Weisman

May 5, 2016

Written by Jean F. Weisman & Gary R. Weisman

My siblings, Lyn Mayewski, Doug Weisman, Nicci Reams, and Meg Barry, and I wish to thank all of you, family members and friends of our Mom, many who traveled great distances, for attending today to celebrate Mom's life. We also wish to thank many others who are unable to attend today, but who have expressed to us their condolences.

I have over 40 years of experience lecturing in front of audiences large and small, but nothing can really prepare one for this. I'm both grateful for the opportunity and completely intimidated. I want to tell you some things about the life of Jean Finley Weisman. Many of you will know at least some of what I'm about to relate, but there will be a few surprises too. Mom was an excellent writer and left us more than enough material from which to draw. I will also add a few tidbits.

Mom was born August 25, 1926 in Malta, Ohio, to Raymond and Jean Naylor Finley. Let's start right out with a little surprise. Mom's given name was Mary Jean, but she didn't like being called Mary Jean as a young girl, so she legally dropped the "Mary" as a young woman, an early example that Mom had opinions and acted upon them. She and her older siblings Bob and Pollyann, and younger siblings Vivi and Nancy were raised at first in a house in "lower Malta", not far from the Muskingham River and across the street from her maternal grandparents home, "Elmhurst". That grandfather, affectionately known as Bampi, was James Ball Naylor, a famous Ohio poet, author, and Chautauqua circuit lecturer as well as a country doctor and pharmacist!

During grade school the family moved to a farmhouse, "Topsyde", near the highest point along the Muskingham. The big sweep of the river below and the glorious colors of the evening sky, enhanced by the firing of iron ingots up-river, never failed to thrill young Jean. The Finley children all enjoyed the many animals raised on the farm, but Mom's favorite was a Banty rooster named Henry, who had to be

rescued from a sale when Mom came home from school one day to find all the poultry gone!

After her primary education at Malta grade school, Mom followed her older siblings to M&M High School in the little “twin city” of McConnelsville, Ohio, on the other side of the river. She was a strong academic student and graduated in 1943, at the age of 16. Another little known fact: she was such a talented thespian that she was offered a college scholarship in that field, but decided to pursue a career in nursing.

The fall after her high school graduation, Mom moved to employee housing at the Christ Hospital in Cincinnati, where she worked as an aide for 6 months. She then joined her mother, father, and younger siblings in Tucson, Arizona, for six months until she was old enough to start nursing school. (The family had moved to a drier climate on doctor’s advice due to Raymond’s respiratory ill health. He had been gassed in the trenches of France in WWI.) As most of her classmates in the fall of 1944 at the Christ Hospital School of Nursing did, Mom joined the Nurse Cadet Corps. She earned \$15/mo in the 1st year, \$20/mo in the 2nd year, and \$30/mo in the 3rd year. The big draw, of course, was that the government paid all tuition, room, and board in return for a promise of service to the armed forces or VA if WWII was still ongoing upon graduation. Fortunately for everyone, the war ended in 1946.

In 1947, when Mom graduated from nursing school, she married Dad. She met him on a blind date in 1946, arranged by her classmate and close friend Betty Franz. She wasn’t wild about the name “Harold”, so she promptly renamed him “Mike”. He didn’t mind ... they were in love! The consequence was that half of our cousins knew Dad as Uncle Harold and half as Uncle Mike! I’m sure that even Mom and Dad’s friends must have been confused at times! Dad was fresh out of the Army Air Corps and had just finished participating in the massive air photo operation for Operation Crossroads, the atomic bomb test at Bikini Atoll. He worked in his parents Ray and Emma Weisman’s chicken hatchery and owned a house at 100 W. Church Street, Mason, a block from the old Methodist church. The couple settled down to

work and to raise a family of five: Gary (born in 1949), Lyn (1951), Doug (1952), Nicci (1953), and Meg (1955). In 1961, the family moved to 300 Reading Road, a big turn-of-the-century Victorian house that was usually filled with children – Weismans and friends.

During the busy years after the children were born, Mom worked at the Mason Medical Center with Drs. Thomas Fox and Gilbert Ohlhauser, first as an evening nurse (when Dad worked nights at AT&T in downtown Cincinnati), and then later as office manager working days. She also enjoyed teaching Sunday school during that time and was an ardent Girl Scout leader. As the children graduated from high school and left home, Mom continued with her work with the Girl Scouts, first in the Neighborhood, in Day Camps, then nationwide leadership and training roles. Toward the end of her career with Scouts, she was given Adult Scouting's highest honor, the Thanks Badge.

After more than 23 years at the Mason Medical Center, Mom moved to a new nursing career in geriatrics. For ten years she worked at Lebanon Health Care Center, first as a part-time evening nurse, then for five years as the night nurse, and finally as Director of Nursing in the enlarged extended-care facility. She always felt that the Lord had led her to this change in career to prepare her for caring for her mother. In 1979, Grandma Finley, in poor health, moved from California to stay for the last 18 months of her life with Mom & Dad.

With all of the children gone, Mom spent more time volunteering at the Mason United Methodist Church. For many years she was active in Vacation Bible School, FAITH ministries, and tutoring for Missions. She enjoyed her support group, the Ladies Bible Breakfast Group, also known as the "Breakfast Bunch", which met every other week for 12 years. She developed a real passion for the Scriptures and became a trained facilitator, leading classes in DISCIPLE for 9 years.

Mom was proud of all of her children and her children's spouses: Donna Christianson Weisman, Paul Mayewski, Teri Johnson Weisman, Doug Reams, and David Barry. She delighted in her 10 grandchildren, Chris, Kurt, and Emma Weisman; Kat Mukavetz; Bob Weisman and Natalie Restivo; Matthew and Jacob Reams; and Sean and Kate Barry,

as well as her great-grandchildren. Mom and Dad loved travel, and with children in five different states and grandchildren dispersed as well, they were often on the road to visit family during their later years together.

Let me say a few things about Mom's talents and character:

- Jean Weisman was an unusually bright person. I think she was an academic at heart. I've never known anyone else who bought an Encyclopaedia Britannica and then sat down and read most of it!
- Mom was a great teacher. Anyone who could successfully tutor me through long division in the 4th grade deserved a Nobel Prize!
- She (and Dad) were always welcoming to all of our friends and the house was wide open for all of our activities. She was a second Mom to many of our friends during their formative years.
- She had a well-developed sense of humor; we called it the Finley humor (all of her sisters had it too): a little sly, a little knowing, a little sarcastic, a lot of fun.
- Mom was an organizer and a leader, but much more importantly in my view, she was a person who could cut through the clutter and GET THINGS DONE.
- Mom was highly ethical, kind, and empathetic, as any good nurse should be. She taught her children and grandchildren how human beings should behave towards one another.

Let me finish by publicly thanking, on behalf of the family, all of those who helped Mom and us during the last difficult years of her life. There are too many to name all, but I'd like to mention Gay McCurley, the nurses and staff of the Alois Alzheimer Center in Cincinnati, where she received excellent care, and the nurses of Hospice of Southwest Ohio.