

# The Life of My Mother

Romana 05-09-2021



My mother was born in November, 1922. She was born in Rochester, Washington to Walter and Ellen. Soon she was joined by a younger sister named Donna. Her father's family had lived with the Chippewa in Wisconsin, but this fact had been kept secret for decades.

Soon, my mother was joined by a second sister: Lois. The doctor who delivered Lois had failed to remove all the afterbirth, so Ellen contracted sepsis and died. Mom said it was a horrible experience, at age five, of being dragged to one final look into Ellen's casket.



Soon, Walter married Cleo, and Mom got three stepsisters: Marie, Bonnie, and Juanita. Eventually, Marion and Ron arrived as Mom's half-sister and half-brother. Walter was elated to finally get a son.

In 1939, my mom was picked up one evening by young Kaarlo, who went by the name Chuck, in his Ford coupe. Chuck was dashing, and Mom was smitten with him. Walter considered Chuck to be too much of a Casanova. Walter was right, since Mom got pregnant in 1940 and was hastily married to Chuck. That baby was stillborn, so that was not me.



I was born In July, 1942, at the free Columbus hospital in Seattle. When the nurses asked where she was born, Mom said Rochester, but they wrote down Rochester, Minnesota. I'm still out-of-spec on paper.



My brother Gary joined the family in June, 1948, and my sister Kristine in October, 1953. We kids were not the most cooperative bunch, so Mom especially had her work cut out for her. Both parents made sacrifices for us, but they did complain a lot.

It was shortly after Kristine was born that Mom got a job, in reaction to the over-domination of my dad. It was also during this period that I developed a reputation for being uncooperative, as Dad tried to map out my entire life. No one knew about autism at this time, but it certainly kept me from ever being close to my dad. Tensions arose in the marriage that Mom and Dad never resolved.



In June, 1980, I shocked my parents by marrying Carolyn, the love of my life. All my relatives were there as a surprise. Now, practically all the older adult at the wedding are gone.

Dad never took care of himself, and he lived with constant anxiety. When he died in 1990, it was especially hard on Mom, who scarcely knew how to handle the situation.



Kristine was Mom's constant companion. It was extremely unnerving to Mom when Kristine died in 2000. She had never thought the youngest child would die first.



Betty Aunt Aide Lloyd Lois

This is a picture of Mom with her Aunt Aide, Cousin Lloyd, and Sister Lois. It was understandable that Aunt Aide died, since she was well past 100, but it was totally unexpected when Lois suddenly died. Mom said it was the curse of the youngest dying first!



Mom was diagnosed with terminal kidney disease in late 2011. She was given six weeks to live. She was quite angry about her condition, but she was determined finish her list of last things to do. She was so determined, that she actually made it to her birthday in November, 2012. She was moved to a family home for her last days. When she considered her list of last chores done, her body gave out and she died In February, 2013.

She had always been supportive of my gender transition. During, her final days, I took the place of the daughter she had lost.

There is no insertion picture that can describe what follows. I was not done. I needed closure, and I wanted to do a last favor I need to do for my mother. I had just become a Buddhist. Even though I was just starting out, I decided to take part in a Sukhavati ceremony for my mother. The ceremony

was for Mom's rebirth in the Buddhist Pure Land overseen by the Buddha Amitabha. This realm of existence helps beings recover from the suffering on earth. As part of the ceremony, we burned a picture of Mother to release her attachment to this life. I will discuss this idea in other essays. During the intervening years, I have come to believe that this was a proper action on my part.