

BETTY'S STORY "SHE WOULD NEVER SAY GOODBYE"

by Mark J. Harlow



*Betty (age 9)
This photo is my favorite of Mom.
It was when her life was free of
pain and responsibility.*

Betty was born November 6, 1931 in Waseca, Minnesota. She was the second of seven children. Her childhood was spent being responsible at a very early age. Her father had left the family, leaving her mother Fern with little means to support her children. The family was split apart as some of the children were sent to live with relatives because economic times were so difficult. I know my mother became an adult well before her time.

Working, going to school and caring for her brothers and sisters was a large responsibility for a girl in her teens. Her brother Duane died from heart failure while riding his bicycle at the age of 11. She married Stanley D. "Speed" Nelson in 1950. Together they had two sons, Don and Stan. At 21 years of age she was widowed when "Speed" died during the Korean War from a brain hemorrhage. He never got to see his second son Stan, and she was left to raise a family on her own.

In 1959 Betty married Roger Harlow from Mankato. In 1960's, she gave birth to Mark and Lisa. In 1960, Betty's mother, Fern, passed away during heart surgery.

Mom raised the four of us to the best of her ability. She would often refer to her children as her "treasures," though her tough love and strong opinions were sometimes misunderstood. In the early 1970s, Betty was in a severe auto accident that left her with neck and back pain for the rest of life. Sometime in her 50s she started to develop osteoporosis and macular degeneration.

After 29 years of marriage she and Roger were divorced in 1988. She never remarried.

Yes, my mother had a very hard life. But she was my mom and a very special lady. I remember MANY good times we had growing up. She was so talented and made many wonderful things! With her seamstress skills, she could sew anything. As a cook, she could make and bake anything. Her canned goods were always the talk of the neighborhood. She unselfishly shared her goodies with anyone who wanted some.

Mom was also very practical. Never a materialistic person, she always gave to others before taking care of herself.

I really don't know how she did it. Putting up with all of our antics. It was pretty wild sometimes, but somehow Mom always knew how to settle us down, usually with a quick warning and then force if needed. She was 95 pounds of pure toughness!

She was in a lot of physical pain most of her life, but she persevered. Even cooking and baking right up to the last months. I remember mom crying (which wasn't very often) because she couldn't see the recipes or the temperature on the oven (even with visual aids) and her goodies wouldn't turn out like she expected. She took great pride in her cooking and canning.

It is very hard to designate someone's life into couple of pages. So can I just say that my mom was very special, talented, wise, stern, caring and always there if you needed something. Though her health deteriorated over the years her mind was VERY sharp! And even though her vision was very limited, she still enjoyed the "roadies" we would go on. I would take mom for drives around the river valleys to look for eagles and other wildlife. We would go grab a burger at the Dam Store in Rapidan, MN on the Blue Earth river. Her favorite was the homemade pies (almost as good as hers).



*Betty & Mark at the Dam store one week
before her passing*

she felt it would be better to say "C-ya later" after that.

Well mom? Although your journey on earth has ended, your soul and spirit live on. Hopefully I can make the best of this new journey and that you are proud. I love you and miss you very much and know you are still watching out for all of us.

-Mark



*Betty (pictured lower right) with her sister Carole and
brothers Warren, Chuck and Curt.*

Mom also liked current events and sports. Daunte Culpepper, Charles Barkley, Mohammed Ali were just a few of her favorite sports figures. She also enjoyed gospel, bluegrass, Cajun and big band music. "I got my red beans cookin" by Big Walter Smith would always get her toes tapping and head moving.

When someone would leave or if she ended a phone conversation, she would say: "C-ya later". It wasn't until she passed away that my brother told me why that was. The last person she said "goodbye" to was her first husband "Speed". As mentioned he never made it back alive from the Korean war, so