

The Essence of Marjorie

February 22, 2020

As each one of us travels this journey of life, we share time with our families, our friends, our neighbors, our classmates and colleagues, and sometimes people we encounter for only a moment and yet, they leave an impression. Today, we gather to say goodbye to a person who has been part of each of our journeys, to mourn together, to offer comfort to her nearest and dearest, and to remember the best of who she was in each of our lives.

When I first came to Union Church, Marjorie and I developed a nice connection and I feel privileged that I too had the chance to spend time with her at her lovely home in Fortune's Rocks, sitting on her deck and looking out to the pond and ocean beyond, learning how to knit a baby blanket, and sharing many rich conversations. So many at our church came to appreciate and love her over the years that she graced our lives.

Over these weeks, a number of her friends, neighbors and family members have shared reflections from of their time with her. When she died, many, many people felt that sense of loss. During the course of her years, she had indeed shared part of herself with so many of us and for that we are grateful this day.

Marjorie was the daughter of a Unitarian minister and her respect and affection for her father were apparent whenever she spoke of him. Her daughter Carol shared The Unitarian principles that her mom was raised with including, "The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Leadership of Jesus, Salvation through Character, and the Progress of Mankind Onward and Upward Forever." She never spoke of these principles with me, but we did speak in broad terms about the ways in which her childhood had made her the person she was: open minded and liberal in thought, seeking to be of purpose and share her gifts, trying to live a life of integrity, and living out in her life and beliefs a hope for the future of our earth, our nation and our world.

Having grown up in a rural community in New Hampshire, she eventually made her home in Maine. Most of you know that she went through several important transitions in her life. She shared with many that years earlier, she read a quote on a tea bag by Raymond Lindquist which said: "Courage is the power to let go of the familiar." She said that quote "brought me face to face with the motivation that I needed to make changes in my life." And so it did... from being raised in a rural community to marriage and family while they lived on a farm to completing a college degree when her own children were in school, moving to Maine with her husband and then pursuing her degree in social work in her late 50's, and later serving as a social worker for many years at the Wardwell in Saco. After her retirement at 80, Marjorie continued to be open to a new church community, new learning with the senior college, and new friendships until the very end. In fact, that quote gave her the inspiration she needed at important turning points to keep moving forward, to seek purpose and community, friendships and connections.

Her friends and family have shared a variety of memories with me of their experiences with Marjorie over the years. Her nephew Charlie Reidy wrote, "I remember being a kid and anxiously waiting to be picked up by my cousins to go to the beach, when there was a knock on the door at the cottage. I ran to open it. "IT'S ONLY MARJORIE," I said with obvious disappointment. And I can tell you, she never let me forget it. Whenever I saw her after that, no matter when, or where, or how old I got, she would hug me and say, "It's only Marjorie."

He went on, "Of course, nothing could have been further from the truth. Marjorie has always been a source of inspiration to me and everyone who had the pleasure of knowing her. She had a way of making everyone feel comfortable and welcome and was one of the strongest women I knew. I jokingly asked her once, after stopping by to visit with her several different times and not finding her at home, "Why aren't you ever home?" Her reply was, "What? Do you expect me to wait around here just in case someone happens to drop in?" For Charlie

and so many who knew her, that was exactly how she was. “She didn't wait around for something to happen. She MADE things happen.”

Her longtime friend, Ginger Hobbs Lever also shared memories of Marjorie which echoed the reflections of many others who had the pleasure of spending time with her over the years. She wrote, “Walks on her beach, collecting pebbles and sea glass, sitting on her deck or at her kitchen table having tea with the sound of the ocean and the ever-present birds, plants, and peace were the balm I needed. She always gave me honest assessments with her salty perspective of life, wisdom, and, most importantly, hope, and love.”

Her neighbors John and Ellen Tighe also shared some lovely memories... Ellen wrote, “She spoke her mind but kindly and with love. There are many of us here today who benefited from those afternoon therapy sessions on the deck or around the woodstove. She nurtured both family and friends with her loving care, woolly knitting,

homemade granola and English muffins. I miss her wonderful smile and sparkling eyes.” Ellen Tighe

John wrote, “Friends come in and go out of our lives but some just stay as our guardian angels. I am sad beyond words but so grateful that I got these 30 years of love and kindness...Marjorie was tough, never one to feel sorry for herself, chopped and stacked her firewood, and shoveled her walkway. She loved her gardens, was in awe of nature, shared with others, embraced the disenfranchised and loved going out for ice cream.” He went on, “The afternoon before Marge left this earth, she stopped in for a cup of tea and cookies and brought me a copy of her famous jam squares recipe. She announced that maybe it was time to stop shoveling snow. She marveled at the way the Christmas lights danced around the room, how peaceful the marsh, told me my cookies were my best, shared honestly and openly and although in typical fashion she would not allow me to walk her home, she called

when she got there so we wouldn't worry. I think she was saying
goodbye!"

Jane Carson came to know Marjorie in recent years through their work together at York County Senior College. She recalled, "We both marveled at how two old ladies who never knew each other until they were well into old age, could become such dear, close friends.

Marjorie was always ready to have visitors to her home. We went for tea on her deck. Or by her wood stove. It was the conversations that mattered. We would talk about everything, family, illness, books, politics, art, flowers and gardening, cooking, diets, life and death.....nothing was off limits. We laughed, cried, and talked for whole afternoons. It was such a wonderful experience to just be with a friend who accepted you for who you were and whom you accepted for who she was."

Her neighbor of 45 years, Meg Buck, remembers that among her favorite memories of summer vacations were the nightly walks she shared with Marjorie along the shoreline. She said she thinks of her every morning when she meditates as Marjorie had introduced her to that practice years ago.

It's impossible to fully summarize the life of any person and that is certainly true with Marjorie. She came to know many, many people throughout her long life; she shared conversations and experiences and continued to be open to meeting new friends even in recent years. She will be missed. We are called to carry her memory forward, to share the best of who she was, to be inspired by her openness to learning and loving, and to living the journey fully. Her friend Ginger Hobbs Lever speaks for all of us when she wrote, "She will remain a guide and presence in my life because of her generosity of spirit, shared wisdom and life lessons, and her love. The energy and compassion she shared will last forever. I am honored and so very grateful to be able to call her

my friend and so much more.” In the Jewish tradition, they have a beautiful expression they recite after the loss of a loved one. The entire community prays, “May her memory be a blessing.” May that be so...