



Margaret Julia Roberts Jamsa

June 21, 1932 - February 1, 2020

Margaret Julia Roberts Jamsa sang her way into the world on June 21st, 1932, as the first born twin with her beloved sister Marie to Vic and Mabel Roberts in Rabey Minnesota. When she was five her parents moved her and her siblings onto her grandparents' 40 acre homestead farmhouse situated on the banks of the Mississippi, eight miles outside of Grand Rapids Minnesota. Margaret grew up joyfully on the farm, truly learning how to live off the land, growing and canning food, picking wild blueberries with her siblings, and raising an assortment of animals for food--even catching turtles on the sandy river bank--turtles which often found their demise in one of Mabel's cooking pots. Their farm's woods and grassy pasture on the river was as a scene from a Rockwell painting. Later, when the family outgrew the little house on the river, her father Vic and older brother Ralph formed bricks from a cement mold to construct the foundation for a new house in the tall pines just up the sandy hill from the river. Self-sufficiency and creative work were foundational characteristics she would teach by example throughout her life.

One day when Margaret was in the third grade, she was singing with her class when the teacher stopped and asked "Who is singing harmony?" Margaret didn't know she was singing harmony. She just knew she was singing what sounded good to her.

Once, while visiting a neighbor with her parents, she started plunking on the keys of the piano in the house. Vic recognized some version of a tune in her playing and decided his daughter needed the instrument. From there, the rest, as they say, is history. Margaret and her sister wrote songs and harmonized their way onto the radio and records. Their 30 minute "Marnie and Marie Show" aired every Saturday morning on the Grand Rapids station KOZY. Margaret spent years performing in night clubs and dance halls, entertaining thousands of people. Many of her progenitors owe their passion and gift for music not only to her but to her loving parents who sacrificed what little they had, just coming out of the great depression, to buy her a piano.

When she wasn't making music, Margaret loved to play baseball, ride horses, and ice skate on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Margaret met Robert at a very, very, early age in 1946 shortly after his return from his all-expense paid trip to Germany--as he would jokingly describe his WWII experience. Margaret had to lie about her actual age of . . . well, let's just say quite a bit younger than her reported age of 18. Margaret remembered being upset that her husband-to-be had to go butcher a pig at his parents' house the morning of their wedding. Not terribly surprising in retrospect, considering how farm work was her husband's version of play.

The young couple wandered for a time before settling on a piece of ground where they started a small dairy farm, a few miles from Margaret's family's river home. Bob and Margaret built two homes on that property from lumber they cut from their own trees. They raised, in part, seven children (Connie, Colleen, Darrell, Bobby, Polly, Ralph, and David) on the Minnesota farm before eventually moving to the farm in North Dakota in 1975 with their three youngest children, with some short stints in between in Utah, Lakota, North Dakota, and Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Margaret's work life outside of the home consisted of jobs at the Rainbow Inn, at the dry cleaners in Lakota, at JC Penneys, and at Sears. While waitressing at the Rainbow Inn, she sometimes sang at the restaurant as well. So, she was nicknamed "the singing waitress."

While working at Sears she was able to purchase the now legendary red, blue, and green carpets for her ND farm home for only \$300. She also drove the grain truck and combines into the night in the fields with her children and husband. Once, when she wanted a new couch, she combined until she filled the grain truck to overflowing and left a trail of grain all the way to the Lakota elevator. Then she headed to town for her new couch.

Like the painter Grandma Moses, Margaret began many creative ventures later in life. She developed a remarkable skill and passion for creating and selling large teddy bears, sculpting and constructing numerous porcelain dolls, and finally developing oil painting skills to produce beautiful floral porcelain pieces.

Margaret's life was deeply impacted at an early age by the death of her month-old, fourth child, Robert (Bobby) Mark. She desperately sought answers from the scriptures and from the local clergy as to the state of her lost child. She found no peace or assurance for her troubled soul until two missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints knocked on her farmhouse door in Minnesota. Their gospel message, especially about the state of children in the next life, rang true to her and filled her heart with peace. From that day on she devoted much of her life to living her new-found religion. She tried her best to instill in her children her cherished faith in Jesus Christ and his gospel. Hundreds of

missionaries in Minnesota and North Dakota found refuge from the storm at the Jamsa home. Countless plates of food and faith-filled stories were shared with missionaries from all over the US and several foreign countries in Margaret's kitchen. When new homesick missionaries arrived in the area, they were told by the departing missionaries that there would always be a place for them at the Jamsas'.

As all lives are when fully lived, Margaret's life was full of amazing triumphs and tragedies. In the end, many of us noted in our discussions with her that her painful memories seemed to be evaporating and her more child-like self was emerging. She longed to go home and be reunited with her husband. She told the nurse a few days before she died that she had seen Bob and that he had held her. There is really no better way to end Margaret's earth story than with that visual.

Margaret was welcomed home by her husband, Robert; her children Bobby, Colleen, and David; her son-in-law Bradley; her parents Vic and Mabel; and her siblings Bud, Ralph, John, and Mary. Margaret currently watches over her surviving twin sister, Marie; younger brother, Pat, and his wife Betty; children Connie, Darrell and his wife Glenda, Polly, Ralph and wife Denise, son-in-law Greg, and daughter-in-law Alicia; and her unofficially adopted daughter Verna, as well as numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. ALL of whom she loved and in whom she finds her greatest pride and joy.

Family Note: We wish to thank the CNAs, nurses, doctors, residents and volunteers in the two nursing homes where Margaret residing during the final year of her life and for the tender care and patience they showed to Margaret and her family.

Comments



“ When Jennifer was just starting to eat solid food, Margaret came to pick me up for visiting teaching and found both the baby and me covered in Pablum. I was astonished when she took Jennifer and shoveled a whole bowlful of cereal into her in a minute flat. She showed me how to put the spoon into her mouth so the food went down instead of coming back out. Her wry comment, "You should never let her get so hungry."

Linda Johnson - February 05 at 11:36 PM