

## **"Grandmother"**

*Erin Salisbury  
Betty's Granddaughter*

Thank you for staying with us so long. I am here to speak to you about yet another aspect of Betty's life -- that as "Grandmother", and "Great Grandmother". I want to thank all my cousins and their kids for taking the time to talk with me over the last couple of weeks, sharing their memories with me so I could share them with you.

We are the twelve children of the four kids of Betty Roberts and Bill Rice, and the four kids of Keith Skelton. And our nine children.

Every cousin that I talked to, said some variation of the same thing, right at the beginning ....She was just Grandma Betty, she was just Grams, or I don't understand what the big deal is, .... I don't want the family stuff to get lost in all this, she was not just a political person, she was reliably and consistently Grandma Betty.

There are details that we will use to conjure her in years to come in our memories and the memories of our children ...half sticks of gum and little wads of tissue in every pocket ... jewelry box was the best to raid – the most glamorous things to use to play dress up -- long strings of beads and these really big 60's clip on earrings.

CNN or CSPAN on while making dinner or in the happy hour

The way she would drive her SAAB -- one foot on the gas pedal and one on the brake ... pumping on, pumping off like a dance on the brake.

How she liked her wine and a little nip of chocolate before bed

Foods we remember.. hardboiled eggs in the Thanksgiving gravy, the cranberry ice, suet pudding. Jenn and Susan will always remember her crazy cheese english muffin concoction.

Places like Black Butte Ranch, Camp Tamarack, the little dish of candy by the front door that was at eye level for a little kid.

Bangle bracelets, shopping trips to Nordstroms where the clerks were serious suck-ups

Occasional Texas twang that would come out after a second glass of wine or sometimes just because she tired ... "Warsh", paaasta

One cousin remembers that Grandma was the first person she noticed that had a sense of style or taste, things had to look nice ... her house was always immaculate just in case company came by. How Grandma always made connections and introductions with other people -- more than just being courteous -- .

Cassidy will remember going to the ceremony when Grandma was knighted for Rosaria.

Henry and Lucie remember how "Granny B" painted their toe nails one recent summer

Luke, Jack, and Emme remember pushing the buttons to the elevator at Grandma Betty's downtown high rise condo when coming for a pizza party. When I asked them what they will remember about her they all said the same thing -- how nice she was.

Alicia told me beautifully about how she is going to remember her laugh -- how it sometimes was a little higher pitch than you expect it to be, but when she would laugh it infected everyone around her.

There are some political memories, particularly for us older ones -- like thinking that going door-to-door was something every family did on Saturdays and Sundays.

Bobbi remembers meeting Jimmy Carter at a television station during the 1976 presidential campaign. Doesn't every grand kid get to do stuff like that?

Strangeness when being six or seven years old and learning to read and driving in the car and wondering why is my Grandma's name on the back of that car (bumper sticker) or on that sign in somebody's yard?

But to all of us she was just Grandma. She was baking cookies or organizing the constant family gatherings.

Kemp remembers convincing his entire fraternity house in Georgia to change the TV channel away from an Atlanta Braves baseball game to watch his Grandma on CNN's Crossfire (Packwood sexual harassment).

Huge family gatherings at the Mt. Tabor houses, particularly the house on Scott Drive. Easters, Thanksgivings, Christmases, birthday parties, and family dinners.

Grandma and Grandpa Keith would cook and coordinate and host. Candles and music, lively discussions, and lots of laughter. In the middle of all of it was Grandma Betty.

One cousin said I don't want to lose sight of the fact that every holiday and every birthday Grandma Betty was reliable and there for us.

Another said the good thing about Grandma was she was always focused on family. It didn't matter what else was going on in your life you knew that she was there. She could be counted on.

We'll all remember her driving energy. After Keith died, Bobbi was living with Grandma Betty. Bobbi remembers coming home one night pretty late and there's Grandma -- in her nightgown rearranging all the furniture in the living room.

One summer Kemp was visiting from Georgia. He was a teenager and staying with Keith and Betty. He was listening to music on his Walkman and Grandma Betty told him he could be reading a book instead, or doing something more constructive.

Grandma Betty was probably our first employer. When we were young she would invite one of us for an afternoon to help her rake leaves, or clean the pool, polish the silver, water plants, etc. And with each task she would meticulously tell and show us how it should be done. Sometime she would make us do it over until we got it right -- but she paid us very well for the work.

Jenn remembered helping her at her condo with some painting. Grandma had the paint (kind of a lime green). Jenn spent an entire day painting a wall. The next day Grandma called her saying "you know I just don't think I can live with that color -- you need to come back and re-paint it a different color." And Jenn did.

Grandma Betty wasn't afraid to tell you what she wanted. She knew what she liked, and she wasn't going to make do with something she wasn't happy with. Better to do the work again, no matter how hard, and try to get the results you want.

There were also times when the lesson wasn't just about the work. Daniel was "hired" to clean the pool, and then his plan was to take a swim after the pool was cleaned. This was during the controversy over the spotted owl. At one point, Grandma Betty asked Dan "so what do you know about the spotted owl issue?" Dan said "I know that it is an endangered species". And Grandmother said, "well what do you know about what the other side of the issue is saying?" The next hour or so was spent discussing/debating both sides of the issue. Grandma paid him (quite well) for cleaning the pool, but Dan figures part of that payment was for being engaged in the spotted owl discussion. Oh, how Grandma loved having a dialogue about issues.

No sugar coating here -- she gave us a lot of advice, whether we wanted it or not. We think she mellowed out in later years -- or maybe we just wore her down, but she made you think about your actions and to be accountable for yourself. And sometimes no matter how good you thought you were being, you were going to get advice whether you asked for it or not.

Jesse remembers being at Grandma's house with a friend when he was in his early 20's. Grandma Betty and Grandpa Keith started grilling him when he complained about his life not being the way he wanted it to be. "What time do you get up in the morning?" "Maybe if you got up earlier you could look for a job -- and maybe your social life isn't what should be the priority".

Exercise advice to Susann ... "be sure to do something that keeps your body and mind active" -- as you get older you need to work at keeping your body in shape." And "good

sports are golf or tennis as you can do them in your later years -- and they are social sports."

"Proper foundation garments" advice to me when I was in my early 20's: "You know there's nothing wrong with wearing a girdle when at some point you decide you need that".

"Money matters" to Megan: "Financial independence is important." Megan asked for some kind of donation for a school fundraiser. Grandma said she would make a donation, but that Megan had to ask Keith herself -- because it's sometimes important for a husband and wife to have separate bank accounts.

The advice never stopped. Very recently she gave me advice that I am going to remember in the years to come.."you know Erin, as a mother you should always put your kid's laundry away in their rooms, no matter how old they are. Because if you put their laundry in their drawers then you have a reason to be in their room...just to see what might be going on".

"The value of an education": She was adamant about getting an education. Where education can take you. Quote from one of the cousins - "she was so very independent. Being around her makes you want to be the best you can be."

Her grace, her generosity. How she knew who she was, what she liked and didn't like, and where she came from.

On being a good hostess: "At a minimum you need music, and candles, and booze."

One of my best memories -- at some kind of function at my mid-west college I think -- not in Oregon, where no one in the room would have a clue who Betty Roberts was. I said to one of my friends "watch how my Grandmother works the room". Grandma Betty walked up to someone, extended her arm to shake hands and said "Betty Roberts". She then proceeded to ask the person who they were, what brought them to the event -- and really engaged them in conversation. Again and again she did this with other people in the room.

She paid attention to other people -- and to us. She treated us grandkids all the same, but at the same time differently, recognizing each one of us as separate individuals.

She once told me that to be a good politician or attorney you have to like people, and be interested in what they care about and what's important to them. She knew that was also the secret to being a great grandmother.

I want to close with one of the most favorite things I learned from my Grandmother. This is something that is very useful and that you all can take away with you. When you go to a cocktail party and you need to shake a lot of hands there's a trick. You have a small plate of hors d' oeuvres - and wine in a stemmed glass. With your left hand, place the small plate in the palm of your hand securing it with your thumb. Put the stem of the wine glass between your index and middle finger. Now you have your right hand free to extend a handshake to someone and introduce yourself -- (shows how, extends hand like introducing self) -- "Betty Roberts".