

## "Mentor/Friend"

*Ann Aiken*  
*Chief Judge, US District Court for Oregon*

Many of you may not know this, but we first met when I was an undergraduate at the University of Oregon, long before I married my husband and on the eve of Betty's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. And until the day she died, Betty called me "Annie."

Legislative politics brought us together, but our friendship was cemented by working side by side on her campaigns with so many threads and shared experiences it is impossible to unravel or explain. In fact, my husband and I honeymooned at her home at Black Butte - at her insistence and great delight. She saw my boys born, over the years we spent countless hours together, and on the phone we talked about everything. She's watched us all grow up. We survived the deaths of husbands together. And recently, she looked at me from across the room and said, "It's been 40 years kiddo, can you believe it?" She was always there. And, so I am here today. We had long talks about what "today" might be like and how she hoped to be remembered, what she felt was important. She asked me to talk about friendship and mentorship.

In rereading the book, *Composing a Life*, all I can say is that Betty's life was a grand symphony with many movements and tempos. Or perhaps maybe one could look at her life a little differently and call it Practiced Improvisational Jazz. No matter we call it, it was rich, complicated, passionate, measured, full of joy as well as sorrow - with an edge - and always with a sense of urgency. How can it be acknowledged in just a few minutes? It can't. My heart, your hearts hold so many memories.

**So when you can't say everything that matters what are the most important things to say?** Betty, my friend, for you -

Electricity filled the air as the word around the Capitol signaled that the debate on the Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment would begin soon in the Oregon State Senate. The year was 1973. State Senator Betty Roberts, the first woman lawyer I even knew, was carrying The Equal Rights Amendment on the floor and I wasn't going to miss the moment.

Her torch was on fire and she owned the room with her passionate, articulate and well-reasoned speech in favor of ratification. At just 21 years of age, I had a front row seat to history, leaning over the railing and watching in awe as Betty spoke movingly about what passage of the Equal Rights Amendment would mean for all women and men.

As an aside, in 2006 at age 83, she still owned the room in Hawaii when she received the ABA Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award. With more than 1,000 lawyers in attendance, she told her story and lessons learned from her life. Later that evening, on the lanai of the Room Without a Key overlooking the ocean, a group of Oregon women lawyers toasted Betty's performance with champagne, and I leaned over and said "You should really consider a career in politics." We all laughed.

Her words left a hand print on my heart and started a relationship that has provided the education of a lifetime. Betty was the champion for equality. She was never apologetic in her statements and actions. Those who knew her know what I mean when I say - she actually had a visceral reaction throughout her life to unfairness and inequality. She had learned hard lessons about how one person can change your life in a moment - one may say "you can't and you won't" while someone else can say "you can and you will" - she lived her life to be a "you can and you will person" for all of us.

At each and every stage of her career and life, she reach out and back to bring others along. Forever hoping that with more diversity would come understanding and acceptance. Betty understood that many people have a tape in their heads playing "I don't belong, how can I, why me, shouldn't it be, I am not good enough . . . ." Well, she was the ultimate ally, empowering people to live fearlessly and passing out an unbelievable number of torches.

As Katherine Heekin so eloquently summed up Betty in a recent piece in the Oregonian: "Her legacy is to risk failure so that others can have victory." Time and time again, she took risks so others would have opportunities and she would savor each victory - so many victories are sitting here today. She stood up and modeled the behavior for all us while at the same time bringing along those who understood that she was opening doors for everyone - right now.

The story of how we met involves a bra, newspaper clippings, a card, a Helen Reddy record, and four fearless admirers and legislative staffers who were moved to reach out to our champion for equality. She not only appreciated the gesture, but she reached back and included us. Betty truly believed in the potential of "Reciprocal Mentorship." She was a spectacular mentor to me and to most, if not all, of you here today. But we were her teachers too, and she welcomed that. She was open to relationships and possibilities. Courageous enough to open herself to opportunity and challenge, to taking chances on people - who could have known when we met that we would be such sanctuary for each other?

Her message to you today is to open your hearts and minds and to live each day with an open heart and mind. To celebrate each others success and pull together to help in a time of pain or failure. To be awake and aware of the possibilities and risks – and chose to invest in people and work to fix what is wrong in the world. Because at the end of the day, life is really all about relationships and finding meaning.

Our friendship may have been ignited by equality and a commitment to fundamental fairness, it also provided a constant reinforcement of the desire to have a whole life - with an active family life (and we all know she defined family broadly) and time to give back to the community. Day one of our meeting brought Jo, Dian, John, and Randy and Carol, Annie, Doug and Tom into my world because Betty didn't see family, work and community as separate worlds - she saw it as the Tom Sawyer approach to torching. So I brought my family, especially my Mom. Betty loved her family and extended family fiercely and unconditionally. They not only called her "Mom," but "friend."

Betty's campaigns crossed generational boundaries uniting young and old to work along with so many people who knew the world might look different if we worked together. We both saw our mothers as the rock of our worlds, women who sacrificed for the sake of the family so we all shared time together to look at what we were doing and what might lie ahead. Betty remembered people and stood by and available to all she loved. Together we mourned the death of my Mom 15 years ago. She gave me the book *My Mother Was a Grapevine*, with poetry that still serves as a reminder that the life's work of a mother is to

plant seeds, gently wrap a vine around those who are in your care, strengthen the whole while remaining flexible enough to withstand the unexpected assault from the outside, thus building a safe haven for the people you love.

Working in and outside the home while remaining active in the community required a commitment to her concept of the three legged stool of family, work and community: authentic balance.

The last 8 months with Betty were an unbelievable gift of time together. We thought we knew everything about each other. But in the last eight months of her life, walls we didn't even know we had come down - there was so much more to learn, to give, to share, to teach.... We treasured every moment. It is her life's lesson to us - to live for others. Give your life to others. We all need to turn our grief to grace. Please take this opportunity to reread or read her book for guidance.

We shared and exchanged many books over the years, especially the last few. Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (of course Betty and I would restate the title Woman's Search for Meaning) helped us understand how and why some people overcome adversity while others succumb. Frankl, when asked to express in one sentence the meaning of his own life, quickly responded: "The meaning of your life is to help others find the meaning of theirs."

So, she seared her hand print on our hearts with a message to reach back, reach down, reach out and, you too, will compose a life of meaning, of joy, of change, of love, of new trails and relationships that stand by and with you. She helped us all find the meaning of our lives. Make your memories count. I cannot imagine Oregon without Betty Roberts, can you?

I love you Betty, we love you Betty and miss you already.

(INTRODUCTION OF THE SONG "For Good")

Betty selected the song, ***For Good*** to be played and her family asked that I explain to you why she selected this song.

It is only through dedicating our lives to the lives of others that we can work for good - in this world. The song dedicated for today's service was chosen by Betty herself. She chose it to send a message: That in reaching out to touch each of your lives, she ended up gaining so much more - you touched her life in return. And that is how you must keep living.

Carry Betty's torch - light others' torches - it is her charge to all of us: Start a bonfire!

{The song, ***For Good*** is performed}.

**"For Good"** Lyrics (Adapted)

(Stephen Schwartz, Composer)

I've heard it said  
That people come into our lives for a reason  
Bringing something we must learn  
And we are led  
To those who help us most to grow  
If we let them  
And we help them in return  
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true  
But I know I'm who I am today  
Because I knew you...

Like a comet pulled from orbit  
As it passes a sun  
Like a stream that meets a boulder  
Halfway through the wood  
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?  
But because I knew you  
I have been changed for good

It well may be  
That we will never meet again  
In this lifetime  
So let me say before we part  
So much of me  
Is made from what I learned from you  
You'll be with me  
Like a handprint on my heart

And now whatever way our stories end  
I know you have re-written mine  
By being my friend...

Like a ship blown from its mooring  
By a wind off the sea  
Like a seed dropped by a skybird  
In a distant wood  
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?

But because I knew you

Because I knew you

I have been changed for good.