Mary Louise Piirto

A NEWSLETTER TRIBUTE
CELEBRATING MARY'S LIFE

By Douglas D. Piirto, December 25, 2021

Hello Family and Friends

It has been a while since I have sat down to write a newsletter at Christmastime. Mary and I were very busy with the move to Wisconsin some five years ago in 2016/2017. Then we were faced with remodeling our twenty-year-old Wisconsin house so that it would become the home we always wanted. We accomplished all that remodeling/repair work with the help of good contractors like Bill Palomaki and many others. Then three years ago, Mary was diagnosed with several health problems chief of which was liver cancer. We did everything we could to keep Mary moving to the future. We knew, however, that her final days were eventually going to arrive. Dying is a tough reality to face when you have so much love for one another. Mary passed away on November 7, 2021. I would like to share with you in this 2021 Piirto Family Newsletter the tribute I presented for Mary at her November 16, 2021, Funeral Mass at Saint Joseph Parish in Hobart, Wisconsin and at the luncheon event following the Memorial Mass at Saint Joachim Catholic Church in Madera, California on December 10, 2021. The tribute below contains information about Mary's life and comments from family members, friends, and me.

Key Words/Phrases to Describe Mary

There are many words and phrases to describe Mary. Loving, Compassionate, Considerate, Respectful, Respected, Service Oriented, Conservative, Hard/Effective Worker, Beautiful, Wonderful Person, Daughter, Sister, Mother, Grandmother, Great Grandmother, Aunt, Sister, Friend, Proud Mexican American Woman, Self-Starter, Great Banking Officer, Wonderful Wife… She earned all of what she got out of life. I have been concerned as to how I could even begin to summarize Mary's life in 5 to 10 minutes. Maybe I just did. Per Mary's continuing comments to me over the years, "You talk too much." So perhaps I should just sit down while I am ahead here. Well… no as a Professor Emeritus I am used to 50-minute lectures so here we go.

IN LOVING
MEMORY OF
MARY
LOUISE
PIIRTO
Date of Birth:
January 15, 1941
Date of Death:
November 7, 2021

Loving and kind in all her ways,
upright and just to the end of her days;
Sincere and true in her heart and mind,
a beautiful memory she left behind.
She had a nature you could not help loving,
a heart that was purer than gold;
And to those who knew her and loved her,
her memory will never grow old.

Dr. Doug's Tribute to Mary Louise Piirto

I loved Mary the first time I met her 44 years ago in April 1977 as I deposited my paycheck at Wells Fargo Bank. Since then, our love for each other has grown and matured every day, week, month, and year. Despite the challenges we faced at different times in our lives, our love grew and matured in so many perfect and pleasing ways. Loving one another and Loving God was and continues to be the motto we lived by. We have been married for 43 years and restated our vows three times. I say to Mary here "Te amo mucho mia esposa Mary Louise Piirto." I love Mary then, now, and forever.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?

Can you imagine what life would have been like had Mary not been born? Life as we know it would have been very different. Mary enriched our lives in so many wonderful ways. We thank God for bringing Mary into our lives.

Mary was born to Lazaro Jose Cruz and Dorothea (Medina) Cruz on January 15, 1941, in Madera, California. We celebrated her 80th birthday on January 15, 2021, at our Hobart, Wisconsin home. That nice event allowed her family, friends, and me to let Mary know how much she is loved and appreciated. Mary was special in so many ways i.e., genuinely considerate, compassionate, respectful, and service minded. She loved her family which included two sons Thomas (Karen) Cervantez and Henry (Sammie) Cervantez. Mary's two sons were baptized and received their first communion in Saint Joachim Catholic Church. She often said to me that her greatest accomplishment was bringing her two sons Tom and Henry into this world. Both Henry and Tom now have successful careers and happy families. The Cervantez family includes six grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, step great grandchildren, cousins, aunts, uncles, in-laws, and well…lots of wonderful people.

What Made Mary Special?

Wow! Where do I begin? Mary and I are both rather conservative people. We both support Pro-Life, conservative views, strong military/police/emergency preparedness, and so many other America First initiatives. Both Mary and I were born on the other side of the tracks. We were not privileged in any way. We earned our way forward. So, in that context Mary realized early on the difference between working hard and working effectively. Mary worked with her father Lazaro who was a farm worker contractor in the Central Valley of California. She spent many hours in crop fields harvesting a wide variety of crops with her father and his crews from the time she was five years old until she turned 18. Mary learned that hard, effective work experience leads to increased income which in turn creates opportunities to enhance our lives and the lives of others. She had a strong work ethic. Mary clearly understood the realities of the work and working well with people.

When she became the Queen for the Mexican Independence Day celebration in Madera, California around the age of 19, Mary was asked what she wanted to do with her life. Mary aptly replied: "That's simple, I want to help people; I want to go to work for the financial industry." That statement fashioned Mary's future. She went to work after she graduated from Madera High School for the local Credit Bureau. Several years later, she went to work for Finance and Thrift. This experience background ultimately led to her being hired at Wells Fargo where she spent 33+ years working her way up the career ladder. Mary retired from Wells Fargo as a Vice President and Loan Officer. Mary was rewarded for her outstanding service to customers and Wells Fargo with several regional and national awards that included all-expense paid trips to Orlando, Florida and Hawaii. I was spoiled as spouses were allowed to travel to these fun-filled places. I beamed with pride from ear to ear when Mary's name was called out to receive her awards and recognition for outstanding service work.

Reminder – The Blaney Funeral Home website (www.blaneyfuneralhome.com) has: a) videos of Mary's Nov. 15, 2021 Wake/Rosary and Nov. 16, 2021 Funeral Mass; b) Obituary; c) a nice PowerPoint presentation celebrating Mary's life; and d) keepsake items you can view or purchase. Thank you for your condolences and support.

Mary Loved Us All--Family Comments

Perhaps one way to sum up Mary's influence on our family is best described by her son **Tom** in what he said to me a few days before the November 16, 2021, St. Joseph Catholic Funeral Mass:

- "Mary was more than just a Mom, she was a great best friend. She was kind-hearted and would always have a smile on her face that could light up a room (and it did).
- She loved having all the family over for any reason. That is no small task with the size of our family. She would love to visit and catch up with everyone's day-to-day activities. Christmastime at the Piirto house was always a treat. Mom would not only put out a great spread of food for dinner, she would also bake everyone's favorite cookies to send them home with."
- Tom goes on to say, "My Mom Mary will be missed by all, she was the heart of our family. Yet we also know that her presence will be with us always!"
- Mary was and is a Mother, Sister, Aunt, Daughter, Grandmother, Great Grandmother, Aunt, Wife, Friend, Banker and so much more. She cared about her family, friends, co-workers, and her Wells Fargo customers/clients.

Hauskaa Joulua ja Onnellista Uutta Vuotta

We asked Mary's Grandchildren Kira, Kayla, Tommy Jr., Matthew, Jessica, and Mirissa to share a few comments about what made Grandma Mary special to them. They replied:

- **Kira:** "Oh how she loved each one of us unconditionally. From putting blush on our cheeks as a small child to gifting us with sentimental items. Her love was genuine and you felt it. Our Christmas gatherings were fun, but you could also see and feel the love through the food that she prepared. She always made me smile when I would tell her I loved her, and Mary would reply with, 'I love you more.' Mary had a way of always making you feel important. She truly was a beautiful person inside and out."

- **Kayla:** "My grandmother was one of the strongest women I have ever known. The saying 'though she be but tiny, she is fierce' was made just for her. She was spunky, an amazing cook and baker, and most importantly a giver. My fondest memories of her are around Christmastime. Every year she would host our family's Christmas celebration and she would do it so effortlessly. From wrapping presents to baking her amazing cookies- the love that went into everything she did showed in the laughter and memories we all shared. One memory I can recall so clearly was the Christmas my sister wished for a spikey collar. No wish was too crazy in our grandmother's eyes. She was such a trooper and always tried to put a smile on our faces. Hearing her tell the story of how she walked into Hot Topic one day on a mission to fulfill my sister's wish list sends me into giggles all over again. Being the 'cool' grandmother that she was, she found the collar and happily watched as my sister opened it that year. Going ever further than that, she even put it on for a picture! And then proceeded to try and understand why a young lady like my sister would request such a thing. It's silly memories like these ones that will make her absence hard. She was definitely the glue that held our family together. Although it's hard to admit, I know she is in a better place. Free of pain and watching over us all. Heaven gained a beautiful angel, rest easy grandma."

- **Jessica:** "I remember road-trips with Grandma to the Atascadero house as a teenager. I also enjoyed her Christmas cookies and treats she made for us. She always gave the best hugs and had the warmest smile."

- **Mirissa:** "Grandma, there are so many good memories I can say about you but then we'd be here all day. I love how welcoming you were with anyone and made them feel at home. I loved seeing the love you and Doug had for each other, but you were also quick to put him back in line (lol). This is a lesson that I learned quickly as a kid too (lol). Now this is definitely a trait I have mastered (lol). We all know you were known for your baking especially this time of year. The dessert spread you would have on the table was something you see in your dreams. Hopefully Ashlyn can pick up your baking torch and carry on your baking recipes. Your beautiful smile, contagious laugh, and love for dancing are things i will never forget. Until we can dance again Grandma, I love you more."

- **Grandson Tommy Jr.:** "When someone you love becomes a memory, memory becomes a treasure. My grandma, Mary, was a beloved treasure that blessed us with so many wonderful memories. For me, it's the little things she did that stand out the most like: a) the sound of her voice when she would say 'Oh Junior' when I did something she may not have agreed with; and b) of course her dance moves. My grandma sure had rhythm. I miss these and without a doubt many people share in the same heartbreaking reality. We are blessed to have a part of a woman like her in our memories. She is a treasure of a lifetime and the legend that was my grandma will never be far from thought. I wasn't always spiritual or religious but how can I not have faith in the God that created my grandma? She is our divine miracle, who is now resting in the arms of God. And forever in our memories. With appreciation Thomas Cervantez Jr."

- **Matthew:** "There is no shortage of words to describe how much my grandma meant to me or the positive impacts that she left on us grandchildren. In this short statement, however, I will attempt to highlight perhaps the most important things I took from such a wonderful woman. My grandma, first and foremost, was a very loving and caring person. As far as I can remember, the one thing that was most important to her was family. She loved all of us very much and worked hard every year for Christmas to make sure we all came together to celebrate. The amount of work she put in was second to none. She was such an amazing cook, but not only that, she was a wonderful listener as well. She wanted to know everything going on in your life. She was so invested in every family member because she cared so much. One memory of my grandma that I will hold onto forever was the dance she and I shared at my sister Kayla's wedding. I think we were both a little tipsy off some crown and cokes (ha ha), but for me, it was such an awesome moment. She looked so happy, and wouldn't you know it, she was an amazing dancer too! I on the other hand was not so great and I tried to apologize at one point because she was putting me to shame. She just laughed at me though and said, 'it's ok sweetie, you're doing just fine.' It saddens me to think that we won't share any future experiences like that anymore, but I am also glad we got to make those memories. Love you grandma, your favorite grandson, Matthew."

LIFE LESSONS

Mary asked me to continually remind her sons (Tom and Henry), family, friends, and former co-workers to:

- Trust in God. Strengthen your faith and live by it. God is Great.
- Spend your time wisely caring for your family and taking care of each other. Life is too short to be wasted.
- Stop the unkind remarks. Build bridges and find ways to get along.
- Understand that life is not about being given things; it is about what you earn. That applies to respect, income, relationships, and all that we want out of life.
- Enjoy life and love one another.

Let me conclude by stating a Bible verse that was and is so important to Mary and me (Matthew Chapter 13, Verse 34):

- Jesus states: "I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other."
- Jesus is real. At the time of Mary's passing a male deer (buck) came down through the woods behind our Hobart home and stood 25 feet away looking in through the large picture windows at Mary in her hospital bed we had for her there. And, at her Funeral Mass Service, Jesus revealed himself to me as I was praying and listening to the Father's sermon focused on Mary. Both of these signs from God have significance and are supported by historical precedents. Jesus is real. Mary is in Heaven with Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Thank you Mary, Rest-in-Peace

Most importantly, we thank Mary Louise Piirto for enriching our lives in so many wonderful ways. We love you MARY. We can hear you saying "I love you more." Rest-in-Peace. Please say hello to Jesus and to our dearly departed family members and friends in Heaven. GOD Bless Mary. Amen

Thank You!

We extend our appreciation to:

- ♥ Father Paider and St. Joseph Parish in Hobart, Wisconsin.
- ♥ All who sent condolences, flowers, and gifts to honor Mary in various ways.
- ♥ Doctors and Medical Staff at Bellin Hospital/Clinics in Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- ♥ The Priests, Deacon, and church volunteers at St. Joachim Church in Madera, California.
- ♥ Friends and Neighbors that took time to attend events and provide support to us.
- ♥ All who helped with planning and conducting the St. Joseph Funeral Mass and St. Joachim Memorial Mass events with a special shout out to the Priests, Deacons, Melissa Rodriquez, Tom and Karen Cervantez, Henry and Sammie Cervantez, Doris and Al Donchak, Florence, Don, and Dave Banaszak, Father Luke Ferris, and various church volunteers.
- ♥ Hospice and Home Instead in Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- ♥ Blaney Funeral Home in Green Bay, Wisconsin and Charlotte Gillis, Funeral Director.
- ♥ So many others!
- ♥ Our employers that gave us time to grieve and care for our families as we celebrate Mary's life.

May the example Jesus set for all of us continue to be our guide. GOD Bless You All.

July 2022 Family Reunion

Plans are developing to have a 2022 Piirto Family Reunion at the Trout Creek, Michigan Piirto Farm. The Reunion will occur sometime during the July 1 to July 5, 2022 timeframe. I provided some ideas to Pat as to the Itinerary. We will be finalizing the Itinerary sometime during the first quarter of 2022. Additionally, I am discussing with Pat having a Memorial Service for family members that passed away since our last reunion event. I know for sure that I will be working with the Catholic Church to officially hold an internment service at Agate Cemetery for Mary's ashes during that timeframe. We will send out updates as further plans are developed.

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Wishing You A Wonderful Merry Christmas And Happy New Year