



Betty Lorraine Basler

1918 - 2016

Eulogy

Betty Lorraine Basler graced us with her presence for more than 97 years. She was born as Betty Coleman on August 8, 1918 in Chatham, Ontario. She passed into her current spiritual dimension on March 22, 2016, joining with many relatives and loved ones who have predeceased her.

In order to properly know Betty, it is important to understand her strong love for family – both immediate and extended. Although she inherited her genetic makeup from her Scottish, Irish, and German ancestors, she learned core values and acquired ethnic and religious traditions from her parents, grandparents, and extended family.

Betty's mother, Margaret Paterson, was born in Canada where she grew up in Chatham living with her three sisters (Mabel, Agnes, and Isabelle) and their father John Creighton Paterson and mother Fanny Hope. The Paterson and Hope families both had strong roots in Scotland.

Betty's father, Arthur Roy Coleman, was born in Belleville, Michigan where he was the youngest of eight children born to Calvert Coleman and Elizabeth Westfall. Calvert's parents were born in Ireland. Elizabeth's family lived in the United States since the mid-1600s, having relocated from Westphalia, Germany.

It is no surprise that a recent DNA test shows Betty to be 39% Scottish, 37% German, and 18% Irish.

Betty's parents married in Chatham in 1916. After their marriage, they took up residence in Detroit, Michigan. Their first child, Jean Hope Coleman, was born on July 19, 1916.

Two years later, a family of three became a family of four when little Betty was born. Apparently they had moved to Canada where they lived in Chatham. Betty's father Roy worked there as a car salesman. Perhaps they stayed there until World War I ended on November 11, 1918.

Census records for 1920 show Betty living with her parents in an apartment on Woodward Avenue about one block south of Six Mile Road. Also living in the upper flat was her sister Jean, half-brother Dodd, aunt Agnes, and cousin Donald who was only 18. Her brother Murray was born later that year.

Betty grew up having close connections with her mother's Canadian family, but having little contact with her father's Michigan family. She had no connection with her paternal grandfather Calvert who died at a public infirmary in Eloise. She may have had minor contact with her paternal grandmother Elizabeth who died in 1922 at the home of Betty's Aunt Jenny just two blocks from where Betty lived on Woodward Avenue.

Betty experienced a personal tragedy when her sister Jean died in a car accident in 1923. Jean was

struck by a vehicle on Woodward Avenue, just steps from the apartment building where the Coleman family lived. Traffic accidents were common in that era, with more than 7,000 pedestrians being hit by cars in 1923 alone – hundreds of them being children.

As a child growing up in the 1920s, Betty was used to “watching” radio shows at night with the family or going across the street – literally right across Woodward avenue – to the RKO Uptown Theater for vaudeville shows and silent movies.

Her son Charles Basler recalls Betty telling a story about how she humiliated her brother Murray once when the producers at RKO ran out of talent and asked if anyone in the audience could dance. “I can dance,” Betty shouted out as she offered to perform. She got on the stage, they turned on the music, and little Betty started to move her feet and wiggle around. Her performance was so bad that Murray blushed, sank down in his seat, and hoped that no one would know she was associated with him. Betty didn’t care. She was the star of the show.

When Betty was filmed for a family history video a few years ago, she could not emphasize enough how much she loved her father. She looked forward to Sundays when he did not have to go to work. She would jump in bed with her parents on Sunday morning and snuggle up with her Dad. Oh how she loved him. It was traumatic when she witnessed him die of heart failure at the age of 48 on January 2, 1932.

Betty was only 14 and her brother Murray was only 11 when Roy Coleman died – just three years into the Great Depression. Roy worked at a Creamery and the family counted on his income to survive. It is rumored that Roy made money on the side as a bootlegger, bringing booze to Detroit from Canada. When the paycheck and the side money ended, the family had to struggle to make ends meet. No doubt, this had an impact on Betty who, for the rest of her life, knew the value of a dime and was no stranger to hard work.

Betty married the love of her life, Casper Basler, in 1941. The license was from Sanilac County – farm country – but the ceremony occurred in Highland Park – a city within the city of Detroit.

Much like Lisa Douglas in the television sitcom Green Acres, it was “goodbye city life” for Betty Coleman – now known as Betty Basler.

One year later, Casper and Betty had their first child, Charles. Two years later, John came along. The two boys must have been such a handful that Betty and Cap apparently delayed having another child for a few years. Roger was born in 1949. Then, after a pause of seven more years, their one and only daughter, Connie, was born. That was it for the Basler family. A team of six it would be.

The family lived in a farm house on Goetze Road in Carsonville, Michigan. Cap ran the dairy farm and tended to the crops, while Betty ran the household and tended to the children. Betty and Cap were a great team. They not only loved each other, but most importantly they respected each other. They surely must have had their differences occasionally, but their mutual love and respect overcame all challenges and obstacles.

Betty’s mother, now known as Margaret Finney or “Grandma Finney” to the kids, would occasionally come to the farm for short or even extended visits. As a result, the Basler children were able to experience her and bond with her. Eventually, Grandma Finney lived with the Baslers full-time until she had to move to a group home where she could receive better care and be in the company of retirees and widows – people more her own age.

Betty’s Aunt Agnes, with whom she was very close all of her life, spent her last two years living in the Basler household. The years of caring for Grandma Finney and Aunt Agnes are a testament to the generosity of Betty and her husband Casper.

The 1950s and 1960s were very special decades for the families of Betty Basler and her brother Murray Coleman. It was a city/county “foreign exchange” era of sorts – especially during the summers.

Each summer, the Colemans would send a batch of kids up to Carsonville to experience farm living. A few weeks later, the Baslers would return the favor – sending some of their children to Ferndale for a taste of city life. The trip would usually also include some time at the cottage in Lake Orion.

The Coleman kids – Larry, Tom, Dan, Gary, Maryann, Cathy, Carolyn, Diane, and Michael – learned many lessons on these foreign exchange trips. We bonded with our country cousins. We also had our love and respect grow for Aunt Betty and Uncle Cap.

The childhood bonds that were formed with the Baslers have continued over the years. Some of the Colemans have gone up north during hunting season, or for a wedding, or special occasions. Some of the Baslers have come down south for weddings, or family reunions, or other events.

Despite having a long life filled with many blessings, Betty has also been touched by tragedy and experienced loss – much of it during a 15 year span from 1978 to 1993. Her Aunt Agnes died in 1978, her brother Murray in 1984, her mother in 1990, her husband in 1991, and her son Roger in 1993. These blows bruised her heart, but her inner strength – developed in her early years during the Depression – helped her to carry on.

The girl born as Betty Coleman who grew into the strong and beautiful woman known as Betty Basler for all these many decades, leaves behind scores of admirers. We – her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and grand nieces and grand nephews – carry her in our hearts and will remember her for all time.

Although her physical body has expired, the spiritual dimension of Betty Basler is immortal. May her good example and best attributes guide us all as we continue to move through our daily lives. What follows are thoughts from some of us who knew her and in whom her memories endure.

By Thomas F. Coleman
March 26, 2016



She was strong-willed and would take risks when she felt firm about something that she wanted. Once she decided that she did not want to live in a group home for seniors, so she escaped by jumping out the window. They found her hiding in the garage. That's my mom!

– Charles Basler

She always wanted to make me happy. She was so helpful and generous and loving from the time I was young to the end. I think she made me a better mother as I had such a great one as an example.

– Connie Panduren

I love that woman to the moon and back. She enriched my life with her kindness, love, and wonderful stories. I would always look forward to our visits. She would ask about my life and family members with sincerity. Her wonderful sense of humor always came through even in tough times.

– Cathy Coleman

Aunt Betty took the role of aunt seriously with a lot of humor and fun loving expressions. She connected with just about everyone in general because of her non judging ways. She stepped out of her role as an elder to connect with her nieces and nephews as often as possible. She taught me how to live – I mean *really* live -not recognizing age but relationships.

– Diane Coleman Rogers

Aunt Betty was the best aunt ever, always loving and caring. Aunt Betty was a “worker bee” and I had much admiration for her stamina. Oh how she loved to kibitz with my husband Steve. After Dad and Uncle Cap passed on, it was awesome to see the friendship between Mom and Aunt Betty develop, including as travel companions such as the big trip to Hawaii.

– Carolyn Skalnek

I loved Aunt Betty very much. She made the best pecan pie – ever!

– Steve Skalneek

The memory that will always be with me is when Aunt Betty and Mama Kay came to visit us at our house in Kona, Hawaii. We took them site seeing every day. At the end of the day, we can back home and the gals went straight out to the lanai and put their feet up on a chair “cause their dogs were barkin’.” I would go to the lanai and ask “Are you gals ready for a Mai-Tai” and Aunt Betty would say: “Bring it on!”

– Michael Vasquez

She was a perfect mother-in-law to me from day one; and, we lived next door to each other all of our life together!!! Family was very important to her. Of course, she was a very good cook. She was never judgmental of any person.

– Connie Basler

Such a wonderful, bright, fun woman! I wish I had gotten to spend more time with her. We will miss you but know you're having a great time at the family reunion in the sky.

– Michael Coleman Jr.

Heaven has gained the most precious angel. May you rest peacefully Grandma. I'm so thankful for all the great memories I have and smile knowing how excited Grandpa must be to see you! As you would say "LOVE you to pieces."

– Lisa Cornwell

Will miss her beautiful soul and so glad to call her my aunt. What wonderful women we've had the pleasure to have known in our lifetime. She's definitely partying with my grandma and many others today.

– Tara Bureau

We'll miss our gal. Heaven gained another great one with Aunt Betty. I know she's at peace and reunited with Uncle Cap, our grandparents and her loved ones.

– Carly Sweeney



Memory Lane Photos



Middle: Margaret / Back: Frank, Casper, Gary, Kay, Roger
Front: Carolyn, Connie, Cathy, Maryann, Betty



Left to Right: Agnes, Betty, Roy, Margaret

More Information and Photos:

www.colemanfamilyhistory.info/betty

email: tomcoleman@earthlink.net