

Eulogies for Joyce Arlene Wead Strader (1929-2014)

Tribute From Nephew Dr. Paul Williams

Joyce Arlene Wead Strader went peacefully home to be with Jesus last Monday, August 11, 2014 at 12:15 pm. She was surrounded by family who were quietly visiting while she rested. When she didn't hear her granddaughter, Sterling, talking, she would open her eyes and with a whisper say, "keep talking." She closed her eyes for the last time and her personal guardian angel, whom she believed was always with her, took her home.

Joyce was born on February 21, 1929, in Selfridge, North Dakota, to Joseph K. Wead and Dorothy Anne "Dolly" Wead. She was raised in the Dakotas with five siblings. Joyce was the "baby" with 15 years space between her and the next to youngest, Lloyd "Bus" Wead. Florence was the oldest, then Dorothy, Leora & Roy.

She was parented by Joseph & Dolly and her siblings. She was loved, protected and doted over, but not spoiled. Her father ran a general store and gas station on an Indian Reservation. She would help pump gas and would pass out candy to the children.

Joyce became an aunt to her sibling's children in her pre-teens. Her nieces and nephews loved their "Auntie Joyce" and even though they are spread out all over the states, they always have kept close through the years by visiting, phone calls, & letters. Joyce loved and felt close to each and every one of them. Maryjo, Donna, Butch, Dolly who are here today, and I, can all testify we felt loved by our Aunt Joyce.

Joyce was in her late teens when her father died and the store was sold. She and mother Dolly or "Grandma Wead," as everyone

called her, moved from different states living with the brothers & sisters until Joyce ended up at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. This is where she met her future husband.

This is Uncle Karl's version of how he and Joyce met. He said he was standing on the side of the road just minding his own business when this little red Nash Rambler pulls up. It is Joyce and her mother and they asked if he needed a ride. He replied he was going the other way to the hospital to do visitation.

He said Joyce offers him a ride anyway by saying he should "hop in."

Uncle Karl likes to tease, "I should have never crawled into that car!"

The Wead family was more than a little concerned about her choosing Karl to marry. He was from a town in Oklahoma with population of 30 people "including the town cows." as Karl likes to say. Joyce had already traveled and lived in many states. He was a Methodist. She was a Pentecostal. Joyce was beauty and well, Uncle Karl ...

The point is she could have had her pick of several young ministers all who were vying for her attentions. But she picked you!

Karl & Joyce had a beautiful garden wedding at the Greenville Children's Shriner's Hospital where Joyce was working. Children were wheeled out on stretchers and in wheelchairs and were so happy to see "Miss Joyce" get married. It was very important to Joyce the children were there. She planned her wedding for them.

That's how Joyce was.

Well, the Wead family finally accepted Karl and everyone got

along beautifully ... but just to make sure, Aunt Florence, one of her older sisters, takes it upon herself to show up really early the next morning on the doorstep of their honeymoon cabin ... you know, just to make sure Joyce was okay!

A few years later, Stephen came along, then Danny, Karla, and Dawn. The Strader's were working for Uncle Roy in South Bend Indiana when the call came from J. Foy Johnson to take over as pastor for him in Lakeland, Florida.

It was a smooth transition as Joyce stepped up as the lead pastor's wife. She would have said she had a wonderful mentor in her dear friend, Aileen Johnson.

She grew in the Lord and used her ministry gifts and talents to the fullest in her lifetime. She was a writer. She authored several articles for *Charisma* magazine and produced and wrote articles for the church monthly magazine called "Come Together."

The writing she is best known for are her little notes. She reached out with words of encouragement and greetings up until her last days.

Just curious, in this gathering today, raise your hand if you have ever received a note or card from Joyce?

Joyce was a teacher. She was a substitute teacher in many of the Lakeland elementary schools. She became a popular ladies ministry speaker and started the ladies "Outreach" downtown Lakeland with her dear friend, Nan Breathitt. The ministry was the first of its kind as it reached to women from many denominational backgrounds.

She was an intercessor. Joyce & Karl called out in daily prayer their family, church staff, and key leaders in the church. Joyce started a weekly prayer meeting 40 years ago, and intercessors from those early years continue those meeting today.

Joyce was a good interviewer for the radio station as well as on TV. She had for many years a radio talk show called "Heart to Heart." Many of you sitting here today have been interviewed by Joyce for that program.

She loved beautiful music especially the harp. (Thank you Nancy for playing for us today). Joyce was responsible for many productions including the Gospel According to Scrooge and the Passion Play. She also spearheaded beautiful banners and worship dance being introduced as part of worship in the church.

Joyce loved people. She sat in the back of the church and connected with the congregation. She was given to hospitality. The parsonage was always open after church for Southeastern students and young adults to come for fellowship. Staff parties, Christmas events and Sunday dinners were her forte and she pulled it off effortlessly.

Many minister wives across the nation would testify that Joyce Strader was an ideal pastor's wife and became a role model for them.

The hallmark of Aunt Joyce's life and ministry was her child-like faith, devotion to family, and her strong desire to see people draw closer to Jesus.

Tribute From Oldest Son Stephen

In over 40 years of ministry, I've helped hundreds of people write out their thoughts for their loved one. I never knew how hard this would be.

Sunday afternoon, I was driving from Lincoln City, Oregon up to Vancouver, Washington, to minister Sunday night, when I got the text message that mom was having heart problems. The family discussed and came into agreement that mom really did not want to go to the hospital.

I prayed as I traveled that the angels would allow her to stay, so I could hold her hand, just one more time. I was so thankful that I had spent a two-hour lunch with her Thursday before I had left for Oregon. I can still see her crinkling her nose at the food. She would eat the desert, but for the past year, she only would eat the tacos and milkshakes that we sneaked in from Taco Bell and Steak 'N Shake.

I told her that I was demanding that she eat her broccoli, just like she made me eat when I was a child. It didn't phase her. She just gave me that grin, that little smirk, tilted her head as if to say, "go ahead and try and make me."

Mom taught me to love signs and wonders ...

At the end of the service Sunday night, I had a prayer line, and there were so many miracles and lives touched. But then the ushers turned me around to see a little frail old man with long bushy white hair, sitting on the front row, wearing an oxygen mask. He reached out to me with this hopeless look on his face, asking for prayer.

The moment I touched him, I felt like I was laying hands on my mother. I was praying for his little frail body, but I was praying for Mom at the same time.

As I prayed, I heard myself say, "Let him dance again!"... I stepped back, took both of his wrinkled, bony hands in mine, and they felt just like my moms. I gently and lovingly lifted him to his feet. He could barely stand. He nearly fell several times. But I was saying to him, "dance."

I was saying "dance again," to my mother.

He shifted his weight, then shuffled his feet, took a few steps, then let go of my hands and began to dance an Irish jig!

Everyone was in shock. We laughed, we cried.

He kept dancing more and more ... bigger steps ... across the front ...spinning and clapping and dancing.

Immediately, I remembered, Mom had an Irish heritage. She had told me how her family came from the McClarnie clan in Ireland. When they came to America, they joined up with General Custer to fight the Indians.

Today, she is no doubt, dancing an Irish jig ...

I flew all night from Portland to Tampa, and as the wheels touched down, I got the text, "mom passed away." The plane's engines roared into full reverse, and my body began to tremble with emotion.

I wanted to fire her angel for disobeying my instructions to wait until I got there. I don't think he was intimidated.

When I finally got to her room, dad stood and held me. We had a good cry. After lots of hugs and tears, and a visit at the window from the bright red Cardinal that enjoyed looking at himself in her window, the rest of the family left to set up a lunch for us in the private dining of the Estates.

Dad and I were alone with Mom in the room. I placed my hand on her hand. I glanced at her face. I turned to my dad and said, "This is not my mother." He just looked at me. I repeated, "This is not my mother. My mother is no longer here. Her spirit and soul have left for heaven, and this is just the body she was using here on this earth." In some ways, it was comforting just to say that.

I just did not want to look at that body any more, because it was really not my mother. I also realize that the feelings I was having were very personal, and it was my way of processing the emotions and grief I was dealing with.

Mom instilled a love in me for the Indians she came to love so much growing up in the Dakotas. When we moved to Florida, we

sat for hours learning about the Seminole Indians. She helped me make a full Indian costume for show & tell.

Mom instilled a love for the Catholics in me. She often attended the Catholic church down the street from where she lived as a small child. She held mass for all her dolls.

Mom instilled a love for all the races in me. She would never let us say anything negative about any race of people. Mom instilled a love for the poor and the down and out.

I can remember when I was about 14, we were coming out of the drug store, and a smelly, drunken, bearded man, with stained clothing, was sitting on the park bench, facing the parking lot. She put her bags in the car; then we came back and sat down with the man.

She interviewed him, then basically directed him to get in the car with us. Everyone knows what I mean when I say Mom directed him to get into the car. She was always "directing" us what to do. Especially, when it meant helping someone. There was to be "no protest" ...

We took him home, got his information, called his family. Shave. Haircut. Put him on a bus and sent him home. As it turns out, he was a Church of God deacon that had just lost his way. His family was looking for him.

We always had dysfunctional people in our house. I guess that's why we enjoy ministering to dysfunctional people. Most of our friends are dysfunctional. Present company excluded, of course.

Mom instilled in me, the power of prayer. She never prayed long prayers ...

I can remember one day, we were on a family vacation, crossing a large bridge with a divided highway. This group of motorcycles came racing by. Mom said out loud, "they better

slow down"... They should have listened to her. Suddenly, one of the motorcycles had to veer sharply to the left to avoid someone changing lanes into his path. He lost control of his bike, and mom hollered out, "JESUS"...

The riders bike, slammed into the guardrail, but supernaturally, bounced off, and he kept riding! It was so amazing.

One of the last times Mom was physically able to come to the intercessory prayer meeting she had started, some 40 years ago, I felt led to kneel down in front of her and ask her to transfer the anointing for intercession ... especially for Israel. She really didn't say much. But I can still feel her hands on my head.

Later, I sat beside her in that meeting and took a picture of her hand in mine.

Her hand is still in my hand. Her hands are still on my head.

Danny, Karla, and Dawn Add Their Tribute

Joyce Strader was just "Mom" or "Mamma" to us. We loved her, and we respected her.

Mom didn't do the disciplining in the family. She didn't have to. We didn't want to hurt her, plus ... all she really had to do was say "just wait 'til your father comes home!" That always seemed to do the trick.

Our mother had a sense of humor, but not like Dad. She did not like teasing. Unfortunately for her, the four of us inherited Dad's sense of humor. She probably felt ganged up on at times, but Dad knew how to wrangle us kids back in.

And Mom knew how to wrangle Dad back in line. The endearing phrase "Now Hush, Karl!" will be forever etched in our memory bank.

A typical day in our household would be Mom in the kitchen waiting on all of us, making sure we had a good breakfast. Once we were out the door, she would start her day of returning phone calls, writing notes, or running errands.

When we came home from school, she would welcome us with homemade cookies out of the oven. We all would have our assignments about the house—enforced and written out by Dad of course—and would help set the table.

Candles were always lit on the table for the evening meal. Dinner was always at six and a cowbell was rung if one of us were playing outside.

Mother had a “no shirt, no service” policy at the table. Manners were taught by mother and enforced by Dad. Stephen can testify to this enforcement as he is the only one of the four who experienced eating dinner in the garage.

There was a “no whining” policy in our house by our mother. She set the example as we rarely heard her complain, about anything. Even in her last days when we knew she was in pain, she would not complain.

There was a “don’t sass your mother” policy strictly enforced by our dad. We knew our Dad loved and cherished our mom. We never heard a harsh word between them. She was his greatest asset. They complimented and balanced each other out. He was scheduled and orderly. She was spontaneous and creative. He was always 10 minutes early. She was always 10 minutes late. His space was neat and tidy. Mom was known for her clutter. She didn’t like to throw anything away. Karla & Dawn would have to sneak to organize and throw out items when Mom was away. Most of the time she wouldn’t notice, but when she did, us girls would hear about it.

Mom knew how to make time for fun. She made sure Dad took a day of each week, just for family. Thursday was our day. No exceptions. Dad was going to have fun with us kids whether he

wanted to our not. Because of her rule, we have many happy memories. "Thank you, Mom!"

We thought our mom was pretty. She didn't have to wear a lot of makeup. She always looked stylish to us. We were proud as little kids, teens, and as adults to be seen and be around her. Her smile was given out freely to everyone. She made friends easily with neighbors and people in the community, whoever she came in contact with.

Mom was like a child when it came to gifts. She accepted them easily from friends and family and our home was an eclectic display of teacups, shells, trinkets and flowers. She had a lot of hats and costume jewelry. She didn't buy any of it—all gifts ... and Dad would help her find her "ear bobs" for her as she rarely left her room to go to the dining hall without them on.

There is one thing that Mom really needed to be truly happy—and that was "a view." Even though she traveled all over the world with Dad and saw some amazing sites, she was always so happy to come home and say of our lake front home, "it's the most beautiful place in the world. Why would I ever want to leave?"

In these last couple of months when Mom's health was failing, it was necessary for her to be in the nursing care part of the Estates. She was given a room with a view of the pond complete with swans and baby ducks. We put a bird feeder outside her window and the cardinals came ... and so did the squirrels. Mom was supposed to be in bed resting, but when the nurse came in she finds Mom out of bed standing by her window trying to shoo the squirrels away from the feeder.

A second feeder had to be set up just for the squirrel to keep him away from her cardinals. We would talk about her moving back to her apartment when she was able, but again she said, "Why would I leave here?" She had her view!

Our mom invested so much time in us kids. Even with her busy schedule in her younger years, she made time to listen and help us. Her best line for any troubles we faced, "Keep a Forward Motion."

What could we give in return for all of her goodness?

Well, as she and Papa would say, "We have 10 beautiful grandchildren and two beautiful great granddaughters—Jordan, Annalise, Marcus, Austin, Alexis, Steele, Sterling, Autumn, Karl, Kyle, Brooke & Baron.

Each grandchild had individual relationship with Grandma. A couple of the grand kids caught on quicker than others that the more you visit with Grandma, the more "checks" you might receive. Her checkbook was always by her chair and she knew how to utilize it.

This is what our kids knew about their "Grandma Strader." They knew she loved Jesus. They knew her favorite Scripture, "Casting All Your Care Upon Him, For He's Careth for You."

LET'S ALL SAY THAT TOGETHER... CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM,
FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU.

Our children knew about family communion and special family times. They learned about Hanukkah and her love for Israel. They knew she and Papa prayed for each of them every day.

They knew she would make homemade tacos shells on Christmas Eve. They knew there would be a Dove bar in her refrigerator just for them.

But most of all, they knew Grandma loved them.

Mom loved everyone equally ... but she did have her favorites.

And you know who you are. (Look to audience) It's you. Every single one of you who showed up today to honor her; you are her favorite.

Thank you for coming today.