

I want to recall what I know and can remember about my Mother's life. I am doing this for my own benefit and yours, hopefully you will be intrigued. Because otherwise, a lot of what I remember will be lost when I am gone. I want to state the obvious that this is all from my perspective and has my opinions of what happened and why. Some facts may be inaccurate or analysis not quite right. I tried to be as honest and truthful as I am able. You be the judge.

Aimee was born in 1925 on March 17th, Saint Patrick's Day. This was a lucky day in Elk River, Idaho which at the time had a lumber camp. Lola Lane, her mother, was 19 years old and a cook; she lived and worked in the camp. Aimee's biological father was Per Emil Anderson a 100% Swede immigrant. Per was born in Sweden and came to the US around age 25. He started life on August 4, 1888 and died on August 27, 1924. He was 36 years old and died from a faulty fuse in a dynamite explosion he had set. He was the demolition person for the lumber company and he accidentally blew himself up. This was seven months before Aimee was born. I don't know much more about Per (pronounced pair). I have a small photograph that Lola kept, taken when he was 34. He was my biological grandfather which makes me 25% Swedish.

After Aimee was born in the camp, Lola moved back to Great Falls, Montana. Her father William Riley Lane had a house in Great Falls. Lola and Aimee spent about a year with William Riley Lane. Aimee's name was not actually Aimee when she was born. It was Emil Mae Lane. Emil was her biological father's middle name and Mae was the middle name of Lola's mother – Mabel Mae. My Mother hated the name Emil because she was teased in school by kids who told her she had a boy's name. Which it was, and she changed it by her own volition to Aimee in 5th grade. I think this change showed a lot about her self-determination, self-identity and character. Aimee was one of the main characters in the book, Little

Women, by Louisa May Alcott. This book was one of my Mothers favorites and she read it dozens of times over her entire life.

After a while in Great Falls, lola had met and then married John Wahlberg in 1926. I was told by Cousin Dawn Devor that Grandma Mabel Mae introduced John to lola. John was born in Latvia on July 22, 1892. John had a good job in the Anaconda Copper Company. "The Mill", produced copper wire and ingots. John owned a house in town and adopted Aimee right away and her last name and lola's, was changed to Wahlberg at the same time. Aimee was one year old when she became a Wahlberg and John was the only father she ever knew. John treated Aimee as his daughter which she was in reality; Aimee loved him. John and lola had three more kids in close succession: Neil, Elaine and David. The early and teen years together were pretty happy, I was told. Remember now "the depression" started in 1929; however John had a secure job at the copper mill and made good money for the time.

The work he did was physically demanding and dangerous. He would take long strands of red hot copper wire that he pulled out of an extruding machine. So he was working next to the smelter of molten copper (think hot). He then pulled the hot wire with tongs of various diameters (from .5 to 1.5 inch) that were 50 feet long to a cooling bin. No matter if it was summertime; you had to wear heavy protective gear to shield yourself from head to toe from hot ember flying all around. The job was hot, toxic, dirty, noisy, physically grueling and dangerous. No wonder he made good money – who the hell would want, or could do that job? How much do you think 50 feet of 1.5 inch copper wire weighed? I would guess at least 300 pounds, if not more. To say he was a strong man with stamina is a bit of an understatement.

The first thing he would do when he walked home from work with his lunch box was take his dirty garments off in the foyer. Lola had always prepared a hot bath for him upstairs with clean clothes nearby. They had no shower, only a bath tub. Aimee said he was completely covered in thick black grime every day he worked. I don't think the bath water was used a second time. Lola would then take the dirty clothes and wash them by hand and would hang them to dry, to be used again the next day. There is a picture of John (from archive) and an article about his work in the June, 1950 National Geographic.

John and Lola raised a happy family. They went to church, had many friends on the block and in Great Falls where they lived and did many activities together as a family. Then around 1937 things changed. The mill closed. I don't know the reason why, but this was the height of the depression. There were no jobs. John had nothing to do all day – every day. John and Lola began to have verbal fights and they became more and more frequent – then all the time. There was never any physical abuse, but very loud voices and contentions. Over time the verbal fights became louder and John started to introduce cursing into his dialog. After a while the cursing became incessant. In a couple of years almost all the words out of his mouth were curse words. He cursed at Lola, the kids, neighbors, friends, postman – everyone – all the time. Lola suspected a mental or physical disease. And she said, or someone else suggested to her, that he might have the advanced stages of syphilis. Lola demanded that all the kids and herself be checked by a doctor. Aimee said she was very angry at this examination proposal, but Lola insisted and she went. Everybody went; apparently there was a genital inspection involved, that Aimee did not want. Nothing was wrong with any of them. However at this time Lola required that John sleep in a little room off the kitchen by himself. She also made David, the youngest; sleep with her, almost like a guard dog. My Mom said the house was terrible at this period. It was around this time that Aimee said “I wish you were not my father” and Lola said “He's not”. Like a bomb shell. Then the story of her birth came out for the first time to Aimee

and the other kids. I guess in some ways this was a relief for Aimee; but not any source of joy. She said later in life to me she always considered him Daddy, which he was, and that she loved him in spite of his defects.

There was something wrong with John, and everybody knew it; including John. He went to many different doctors, but nothing was definitively determined. I think most, if not all doctors, were connected to Anaconda Copper in some capacity. Anaconda was still a huge presence in Great Falls, actually the entire State, and there was talk of them reopening. I think John had neurological damage from toxic poisoning. And I think none of the doctors would point the finger at Anaconda for fear of retribution.

Well Anaconda Copper did reopen and John went back to work. I think this was around 1940 or so. The house did receive economic relief, but the spirit of the family was broken. Curiously, John got more of a supervisory job and was not that close to the toxic pit. I think the company knew they poisoned him and gave him some respite. Anyway, it was time to poison a new, younger generation of workers.

The family limped along for a while but things deteriorated more for John psychologically/neurologically; and thus the atmosphere he created in the household. In early 1943, Lola and the kids moved out and into a really shabby, run down old, little house in a bad part of town. Aimee said she really hated it and it was full of creepy, crawly bugs. However she was thankful there was no more screaming and cursing. This house was quiet. She was amazed at a tranquil peaceful atmosphere. She felt she could breathe. Lola started to work fulltime scrubbing floors on her hands and knees for the Rainbow Hotel; the biggest, best hotel in town. Mama said she would come home with bleeding fingers. All the kids were old enough to take care of themselves. The kids did most of the household chores, cleaning, laundry, preparing meals, getting themselves to school and back

home. Aimee graduated High School in 1943 and started to work for an Optometrist. Almost all she made she gave to lola to support the household. I guess they stayed in this house for about a year. In this year timeframe things got progressively better. lola got a promotion into housekeeping at the hotel. Better to make beds than scrub floors. Eventually, lola was promoted to seamstress and did all the sewing for the Rainbow Hotel. She made curtains, drapes, uniforms, hats, table clothes and napkins, decorations, slipcovers, repaired everything and anything else they wanted. She was very talented and a master at sewing. Aimee switched jobs and worked at a law office, at twice the pay. She had taken secretarial courses in High School. She could type 60 words a minute accurately, do shorthand and take dictation. So, within a year they got out of the "rat hole" into a nicer house in a better part of town.

All of Aimee's life she had a large support system outside of her immediate family. There was William Riley Lane her Grandfather, Mabel Mae Lane her Grandmother, Uncle Art, lola's brother, Aunt Geneva lola's half-sister, Aunt Rena lola's half-sister. Uncle Cecil, lola's half-brother was not that close to the family and lived in Missouri. lola had many friends, but Francis Sibert was the closest and was very influential to Aimee. Aimee had four lifelong friends since early grade school: Gladys Urshill, Alice Pilgrim, Lu Habel and Helen Lower. They played and communicated with each other to the last of their days.

John Wahlberg died on 10-21-45, he was 61. After lola and the kids left his house, they did not see each other very often. John's psychological/neurological condition continued to deteriorate and I don't know how long he lasted at the mill. The last 7 years of his life was a nightmare for him and the rest of the family. But thank God for capitalism and free enterprise. They had respirators way back when. How come nobody thought to use them? Did they just not care if workers suffered? Or maybe, they were too ignorant to realize how toxic the smelter was? I

doubt it, I think they were negligent. Worker's rights were just beginning to be considered with the advent of Unions in the 30's and 40's. I am sure John's story influenced my Dad because he was involved with Union organizing even before he met Aimee.

In early 1945 William Riley Lane bought the house at 512 Seventh Avenue North, Great Falls. Lola and kids moved in with Grandpa at the time he took possession. Grandpa Lane was born in 1865 in a covered wagon, somewhere in the Kansas Territory, on route from Virginia to California. The Lane family goes way back in history. My Aunt Donna Wahlberg wrote a genealogy book called – So Be It – that documented the Lane & Devor family's in Virginia back to early 1700. We are all Lane & Devor descendants. Grandpa Lane died in 1953 at age 87 and left the house to Lola. Lola died in this same house on June 2, 1991 at age 85. William Riley Lane was first married to Lilly Wilson in 1890; they had three children: Cecil (1892), Geneva (1894) and Rena (1900). Lilly died of TB in 1903. These children were Lola's half-siblings that she grew up with along with her full brother Arthur. William Riley Lane married Carlie Mae Devor in 1905 and Lola was born in 1906. Arthur Lane was born in 1908. William and Carlie were divorced in 1917. Carlie Mae changed her name to Mabel Mae in 1924. Mabel Mae was born in 1887 and died in 1967 at age 80.

So, now that I have given you a little historical context of the family, not all, but you can get more from Aunt Donna's book – So Be It. I also got a lot of information from my Mother over my entire life with her. Let me now tell you about the support system that Aimee had. First will talk about is Grandma Mabel Mae – she was a real character. My Mother said she had six husbands over her life and probably many casual boyfriends. Aunt Donna only documented 4 husbands, but Aimee said there were 6. William Riley Lane was her first at 18, but she had a taste for men. She was a wild woman for her time, and would even be considered such today. William Riley Lane was a thoughtful, quiet man and liked to stay home and read

books, magazines, newspapers, Sears Catalog and tinker with things. Mabel Mae had an itch for excitement – she liked to party. After William & Mabel got devoiced in 1917 she found more gregarious and exciting personalities. All of her succeeding relationships were with questionable characters. She got involved with bootlegging, gambling, con-artists and running whisky from Canada to Great Falls during prohibition. She had a speakeasy for a while and another time a restaurant in a hotel, and a chile parlor in her house. She would serve whisky on the sly at these establishments. She was arrested for running Canadian whisky one time and spent 6 months in jail. She was living life in the fast lane. She craved excitement and wanted to have fun. However that was not her only side; she also liked packing up supplies and going camping and fishing for extended periods. She would often take all the Wahlberg kids camping and fishing. She would load up a “Grub Box” as she called it and off they go. Montana has some pretty nice places to go camping and fishing. She would teach the kids how to explore and enjoy nature. Grandma Mabel insisted we were related to Pocahontas. My Mother believed it firmly and I am very fond of the idea. I am sure Mabel told some pretty wild stories over a campfire. She was very much loved by her family. She would often come stay with Lola and family for varying lengths of time over the decades between adventurous “excursions”. Aimee told me a story that happened in her mid-teens. One time she was walking home from school with her friends, in the afternoon. She met Grandma Mabel walking towards her and she was stone drunk. Aimee wanted to help her but Mabel refused. Aimee was embarrassed; but could do nothing. She and all the friends continued walking home. I think Aimee frequently had discussions with her friends about Mabel; of course she did at home with Lola and siblings. Mabel had a full and interesting life – she walked her own path and “tested the waters” along the way.

Like I said before William Riley Lane was a thoughtful quiet man. He didn't crave excitement like Mabel. In his younger years he was mostly a farmer in various places and he had a stone quarry at one point. In 1918 he got a

job running the ferry in Loma, Montana across the Missouri River. He lived in a one room cabin with an outhouse, which was 2 miles outside the town of Loma. Loma was, and is, a teeny town. He was isolated; the only people he saw were locals who wanted to cross the river. He was content in his own company. He was a very much, a self-contained man. I imagine there were days when he didn't see anyone. He worked at this job, on and off, until he retired. In the wintertime the ferry shut down because the Missouri River was frozen. This could be for 5 months or more. He had a house in the town of Loma which was painted blue; the color blue was an oddity for the time. William actually started the first lending library in Loma with his own books. He had a very strong frame and was fit as a fiddle pretty much until the end. Moving the ferry by hand took muscle. He motorized the ferry in the 1930's but it was still hard work in all kinds of weather. The Wahlberg kids would visit him often and stay in his cabin. He would do all kinds of activities with the kids: fishing, hunting, swimming, hiking, exploring nature, telling stories and reading books to the kids. The kids loved it and so did he. I have a stainless steel ladle hanging in my kitchen he used to scoop water out of a well for drinking. His cabin was lined with books everywhere and that was his main source of entertainment – reading by kerosene lamp. There was no electricity at the cabin or ferry. My middle name is William and it was for him and also my father's brother. I have a brown leather coin pouch with W R Lane in gold print; that lola gave me after Grandpa died in 1953. Originally it had a silver dollar in it. I spent that in the 1950's; but I still have the pouch.

Francis Sibert was a next door neighbor and lola's closest friend in Great Falls. Francis introduced lola to the Daily Word when she was in dire straits with John Wahlberg. The Daily Word is a Unitarian Church publication with a 2 or 3 paragraph inspirational message for each day based on a single word. The words varied and so do the messages. The Daily Word was important to lola, but also Aimee. They both read the Daily Word until the day they died. Both families were very close and relied on each other in good times and bad. I read the Daily Word every day.

Aimee had four lifelong friends since early grade school: Gladys Urshill, Alice Pilgrim, Lu Habel and Helen Lower. These girls were inseparable and simpatico. They knew everything about each other. I think Aimee became friends with Alice when she was 6 years old; and the others not long after. This kind of friendship is not casual; they were close family, soul mates, until the very end. They did everything together as kids and watched out for each other growing up and beyond. I have pictures of them together dating back to the early 1930's. There is one picture of them all dressed up in costumes in their late teens making funny faces for the camera. Lola wrote letters her whole life, and Aimee had the same predilection. My Mom had absolutely beautiful hand writing. I would call it calligraphy at its finest. Aimee kept all of her correspondence in a box, which I still have. They date back to the mid 40's.

I registered the sterler.com domain in 1998. I built a computer in 1999 for Aimee and gave her the email address: Aimee@Sterler.com. I upgraded and maintained her computer and printer/scanner for the next 14 years. Aimee was a fast/accurate typist and loved to email – everyone. I am sure many of you got emails from her. I have all of her digital documents of which there are thousands. Digital is forever. She wrote to newspapers, congressman, senators and presidents on a regular basis and got replies. She also wrote family and friends all the time. My Mother was a terrific communicator; but most important she was a fantastic listener. She spoke with kindness, but also listened from the heart. Aimee had the talent, to listen; that she absorbed from Lola and Francis Sibert; however, I think her Father taught her to listen, which I will tell you more about later. She was a past master at listening. It almost sounds like nothing, an inconsequential act; huh - listening – so what. However it is quite the opposite. If you really pay attention you can hear a person's pain, anger, frustration, anguish and sorrow. You can also hear their love, joy, excitement, longing and passion. Many times what a person says contains much more than they intend to reveal. The range of human emotion and feelings is often hidden by how

we dress, talk, walk, smile or not, and many other things. But all of our feeling are there, if, you know where to look. It takes patients, soft eyes and a non-intimidating gentle smile to “really know” another person. To set another at ease you must be patient. You cannot be in a rush, and, you have to move slowly in every way. Most of us do not reveal ourselves, we think, to others very often. We hide our thoughts and feelings because we are scared of what others might think, and, even to ourselves. However what is going on behind the curtain in our brains is not totally hidden; either to ourselves or to others. If you listen quietly, attentively, compassionately things will poke out from behind this screen. If you are a good listener you must have courage because you must hear yourself first. You must learn compassion for the house you are residing in. This is the domain of your consciousness. It is not the easiest task to accomplish; actually quite the opposite. Most of us play hide and seek with ourselves; to say nothing about the rest of the world. To get quiet and hear our dumb, angry, prejudice, superficial, sexist, fearful, scary thoughts takes bravery. To say nothing about our wants, desires, wishes and dreams. To touch another’s heart, you must first feel/know your own. Like my father said a hundred times or more; the greatest words ever written: “Know Thy Self”. My Mother had courage – she was not afraid of what she saw; either inside herself or what was beyond.

Aimee was self-effacing in many ways. She didn’t think she had a great intellect, or talents. Aimee loved to sing her entire life; but not solo, she preferred harmony in a small group or choir. She could sew, but not nearly as well as lola. She was a basic cook, nothing too fancy, but good. She liked to play cards and games with family and friends, but was OK with not winning. Aimee was not competitive; her focus was having fun. She was not particularly athletic, but was satisfied with her dog paddle swimming and riding a bike, slowly, never racing. She drove the car slowly, never rushing it like my father did. Aimee ate all her food very slowly; she was always the last person eating at the dinner or any table. She just sauntered along in the slow lane of life. That’s where she felt comfortable. She didn’t

have to prove she was good or worthy; actually she knew it in a modest way and that was enough for her. She had a philosophical disposition which was rather simple, but impenetrable: "Treat people how you like to be treated". The golden rule was all she stressed and followed. I heard it spoken infrequently; but I saw it performed in behavior tens of thousands of times. The thing that is funny about my Mother is that I never met anyone who practiced the golden rule more consistently than her. She walked a path of love and kindness. She did not point a finger and say "shame on you". If she said anything, she looked softly with her eyes and would say something like "if someone did that to you, how would you feel". She treated people, everyone, with love and kindness almost all the time. I am just crying tears now thinking how beautiful my Mother was. I had to pause here for a while in order to regain my composure. I never felt I deserved my Mother. I haven't come close to her stature. I am more like my Father – crude, rough-edged.

My Mother always looked for the best in people. My Father said a few times: "You would find something nice to say about Adolf Hitler". She never did, she would smile and say nothing or change the subject. My Mother operated under the principle "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything". She never said those words, ever, but she behaved that way. My Mother was not preachy; she did not spout dictums, aphorisms, maxims or precepts. She was considerate because she wanted to be respected back. She knew that, you get what you give. I think this understanding and behavior came to her most, beginning, around 12 to 13 years old. This is when her father, John, started to go off the level playing field. She heard the most horrible things from a man who was never like that before. John was a sweet, loving man, and then became something else. I know she talked a lot with Lola and Francis Sibert at this time. She was also very close with her siblings and friends and they talked all the time. She discovered and knew, there were monsters that could be in all of us. Unfortunately, John became a monster in front of her eyes. She figured out, with the help of her support system that you can not kill a monster,

less you become one yourself. She saw a transformation in someone else, that she loved, and it transformed her in the opposite direction. Poor John suffered, but every one of his kids grew up to be sweet as sugar. I know them all. John was actually a great teacher in his own way. He taught others not to be like him. I think the interaction she had with John; at this critical period of development, 13 to 18, made her determined to treat everyone nice. She learned to pause in her thinking and speech when she interacted with her father. Her Father gave her pause. His behavior was so out of line; she developed the habit of thinking and acting, with a critical, deliberate response, slowly. Over this time, it became a habit. God rest John's soul.

So, my Mother met Bernie in the beginning of 1945 at a dance held for servicemen in Great Falls. She thought he was handsome enough, but also that he was brazen and loud – which he was. However, Bernie could be charming and he was clever and funny with his deep Brooklyn, New York accent. Over the evening Aimee warmed up to him a bit, and agreed to meet him next weekend for coffee or something. They met and really talked face to face for hours without distractions. They had a wonderful conversation and Aimee discovered that this man was a serious intellectual with a passion for humanity and the downtrodden. At this point Aimee was intrigued and they began to see each other regularly. They began to do fun things together and continued to have very meaningful conversations. Bernie met the family, over dinner, and Lola really liked him. Bernie was on his best behavior. Bernie talked with Grandpa William Riley Lane after dinner, it was his house. William was a completely self-taught intellectual because he was a voracious reader on every kind of subject. He read for pleasure but also to investigate all kinds of things. Bernie and William really hit it off and they became, over time, friends too. Aimee and Bernie were dancing through life – having a lot of fun and they fell in love. Both of them – head over heels.

And they lived happily ever after – not exactly – but overall they had a good life together.

My Mother had a boyfriend that joined the Navy in 1944; he was a rancher. I think he went to Great Falls High School with Aimee. They were very serious. They were betrothed and he gave my Mother a cedar hope chest, full of things; which I still have. He died in the war in early 1945 in the Pacific. My Father came along shortly thereafter and it distracted her from this sorrow. They had a whirl wind courtship most of 1945 and my Father was honorably discharged at the end of the year. He went home to New York; both of them probably thinking – it was nice - but we live in different worlds. They agreed to write to each and explore if being together was what they both wanted.

My Mother wrote Bernie in early January of 1946, that she was pregnant; she wrote beautiful letters, both in content and her script. This hit Bernie like a ton of bricks! He talked with, everyone, in his entire family and all his friends. However, all of his sisters literally demanded of him: “do the right thing”. Why do you think his sisters said: “do the right thing”? The reason is because they knew what Bernie knew that Lynne was his child. This more than anything, convinced him to bring Aimee to New York. He paid for a ticket, by train, and Aimee came to New York, I believe in early February.

Aimee moved in with the whole Sterler family on Gates Avenue. It was a crowded apartment. Gertie was already living with Harold and daughter Barbara and soon to be Billy. Ruthy was there for a short while before she moved in with Jack and had Phyllis. This was a totally different culture for Aimee. It should have frightened anyone from Great Falls, Montana. However Aimee had something that only Bernie was aware of, she knew how to love people. She totally disarmed any and all skeptics in short order, including the most difficult one – Henya. Everybody loved Aimee

and she spent almost 2 years in this house. Bernie showed her NYC and it dazzled her. She loved the food, lights, noise, smells, ethnic enclaves, crowds and clash of cultures. I was told by many it was a very happy time. Everyone went together to the movies on the weekend to watch a triple feature. For the price of admission you got one flowered piece of China. They all gave their plates, cups and saucers to Aimee. This is how she got her first set of dinnerware. I remember using it as a young boy into the late 50's. Aimee loved this set of dishes, but young kids are tuff on China. I have one remaining serving plate from this time – I keep it in a display cabinet. Aimee made some mistakes in Henya's kosher kitchen by using the wrong pot for dairy or meat. Henya would wail and Sam would have to take the pot to the Rabbi. He would rub sand on it and give it his blessing – all better. In the beginning Henya was distraught that Aimee was not a Jew. No problem, she went to the same Rabbi - and with a little hocus pocus – boom - you're a Jew. It helped Henya, that Aimee's maiden name sounded Jewish – Wahlberg. Henya would say "she vaz ah Vallberg"; while nodding her head in approval.

Bernie found veteran housing in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. It was all young couples with children. This was the baby boom generation. I was born here. My Mother made lots of friends, some that remained long after they left. They stayed here for about 2.5 years. I have pictures of her washing us kids in the kitchen sink. She loved it here and parting was sweet sorrow.

We moved to North Babylon in 1952. My Mother worked from morning to night, every day. She was a hard worker; my Father - not so much. He grew up in a society where women did the cooking, washing, cleaning, laundry, took care of babies and most household chores. He was a typical chauvinist of his time. Henya did all the work in his house and then some. When Bernie came home from work he liked to read, smoke, watch TV, and play chess. He interacted with all of us, but Aimee did all of the

infrastructure work. This is the same environment Aimee was familiar with; Lola worked all the time – like an ox. The men told each other how important they were.

The early years were happy for us all. Sharon was born in 1959 and that was a big deal for us all. None of us kids were aware of each other coming to the family, or, not much aware. However, we all knew Sharon was coming. We speculated, but nobody knew if it was boy or girl. Lynne watched us because she was 13 and Bernie took Aimee to the hospital. Bernie came home and told us it was a girl and I cried alligator tears. I wanted a brother; but I love my 4 sisters, now, and always have. We were all delighted with Sharon – a new toy.

1962 to 1966+ were tough times in our house. However, Aimee was always a rock. It didn't matter if the finances were bad; she said "count your blessings". My Mother had weathered much, much, tougher times than we ever experienced and she did what her Mother did to her – she loved us. My Mother held the family together, come hell or high water. There was no quit in my Mother. Her determination is what saved us all; especially Bernie. My Mother was the strong one in our household – psychologically – spiritually - physically.

In late 1962 Aimee went to work as a secretary in the next town over at Airborne Instrument Laboratory (AIL). She worked at AIL for 23 years. She liked getting dressed up, working in a professional engineering environment and the routine. In addition she put food on the table and paid the bills when Bernie wasn't. We older kids had to take up the slack raising Sharon, but she was a self-starter and it wasn't long before Sharon was on her own, early on. Aimee was well respected at her work. She was an early riser and would make lunches for all us kids. She would take Sharon next door to Bitta Delemar, who had two daughters around her age. And

off she went to work. My Mother was a good looking woman and took pride in presenting herself well. This trait/habit stuck with all my sisters.

However, my Mother did not flaunt her sexuality; she was modest. Like I said, my Mother was good looking and had a very nice figure. Even into the 60's and 70's and after five kids. She always wore dresses or blouses that were conservative; never revealing anything. I never saw her present herself sexually to anyone, even Bernie. I always respected that she did not use her sexuality as a tool or weapon; many women do. Sex was totally private for her and Bernie. Around the house she covered up as well. When we went swimming at the lake or ocean; she wore a one piece bathing suit that had a little skirt at the bottom. Sitting on the beach she covered up with a robe or blanket, even when it was hot. She did not sunbathe. My Mother's clothes were always reserved, not provocative. She was not a prude, we could have conversations about sex; but her own sex life was a very private affair that she did not share publically. At wedding, bar mitzvahs, and celebrations my Mother would dance, but always modestly, slowly. I could see men peruse her sexually. Believe me; I know what that look is all about. She never responded to any sexual innuendo or gesture – she just ignored it and acted like it didn't happen. However – she was aware. All women are aware of this phenomenon. Her grandmother, Mabel, was not quite prim and proper; Aimee was always a modest lady. After Bernie died, she never entertained the idea of a boyfriend. I talked with her a couple of times about it; she said flatly – not interested. When I was around 25, I asked Bernie, once, if he ever cheated on Aimee. He was a travelling salesman. He emphatically responded with one word – “Never”!

The late 60's and early 70's was a roller coaster in my house. I went off to college in North Dakota in 1967. Lynne was in nursing school and lived at the school and then after graduating never resided in the house again. Elaine went off to Europe, met a boy, and then moved to Houston, Texas.

Gail was around until 1970 or so, then moved to Boston and stayed with Lynne. Lynne was working at Boston General Hospital and Gail got a job as a medical secretary. Then Gail married Dennis and they were off on their own. Sharon was the only child left in the house. Bernie was doing better occupationally, after his nervous breakdown; but just OK. Aimee was a steady worker – always. Aimee made the house a home. We all came back to visit and seek our roots. Bernie got into windmills in the mid 70's and finances improved considerably. Aimee was more content because money was more available. Towards the end of the 70's Aimee started to gain weight. I think because they went out to eat more and they just bought more crap that they ate at home. The eating handcuffs were off Aimee; for the first time in her life. Bernie never had any eating handcuffs. I don't think it ever bothered Aimee that she was chubby. She was happy – plain and simple. Bernie was always heavy, as I remember him most. My father kept with the windmills until around 1985 and then he was home fulltime. In 1985 he started to collect social security. He never really worked again.

Aimee was starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel at AIL and contemplating travelling more. Her kids were all over the place and she wanted to visit her Mom and friends in Montana. She was thinking elsewhere. In mid-summer 1986 she retired from AIL. In late summer I came to fix up their house for sale. It was falling apart from lack of maintenance. I polished it up over a 3 week period. Aimee went to Texas to be with Sharon for Ray's birth in December 1986. Bernie stayed home by himself and did not enjoy it. Bernie & Aimee sold their house in early 1987 and moved to Austin, Texas. They got an apartment close to Sharon, Andre and Ray. They really enjoyed Texas, but especially their only grandchild – Ray. Well, the twins (Robert & Clinton) came along in mid-1988. Bernie & Aimee were contented there for about a year. Then Andre got a job at UCLA. The whole group moved to Long Beach, California in 1989. Lynne and John had Ian in May. Susan and I had Sierra in July. The whole gang of us with kids lived in the LA area for a short time. My folks

were very delighted. However, Susan and I had plans to move north to Valley Ford, California and in September, 1989 we did. John and Lynne bought the house I built in Long Beach, which we moved out of. So, there was a solid group in Long Beach, still, and Bernie & Aimee were enjoying themselves.

Aimee and Bernie came to visit us in Valley Ford, once 1990 and once in 1991. Aimee came by herself in January 1991 and was planning to stay a couple of weeks. On the second or third day of her visit, she went for a walk outside on our 11 acres. Susan was in town with Sierra and I was sleeping on the couch in the house. I had a dream that Aimee was calling to me for help. It felt so very real and I woke up and went outside to look for her. It was a very windy day on our hilltop. Then I saw Aimee 400 feet down the driveway on the ground. My dream was real and it stunned me for a split second. I rushed down to her; she was weak, exhausted and I could see she was in a lot of pain. She had tripped on a rock and badly broken her ankle. I said stay there and she replied "I can't move anywhere", in an exasperated way. I got my truck next to her and picked her up and put her in the passenger seat. She was in a lot of pain. I drove to Palm Drive Hospital in Sebastopol and wheeled her in the emergency room. Well, to make a long story short she had surgery that night and the orthopedist put many pins and dowels to stitch her ankle back together. She recovered at my house for the next 3 months. It was an ordeal for her, but she mended. Bernie came a few days before she left and they both went back to Long Beach. I think my dream of Aimee calling for help was a form of ESP. What do you think it was?

On June 2, 1991 lola died of a heart attack at home. My Aunt Elaine was living with her at the time and found lola in bed. She was a wonderful lady. I wish I had spent more time with her. I miss talking with her. This event was a hard blow for Aimee. lola was a terrific mother, she gave everything to her kids but most of all, sweet love.

On December 9, 1991 Bernie died at Long Beach Veterans Hospital. He knew his time was up and so did we all. Lynne, Elaine, myself, Sharon and Aimee were with him for the last 3 days in the hospital. It was actually a beautiful time together for all of us. A lot of love was expressed.

1991 was a hard year for Aimee. She expressed exactly that to me a few times in the coming years. Aimee came up to Valley Ford in the beginning of February in anticipation of Olivia's birth in 1992. Olivia was born on 2-26-92 at Memorial Hospital in Santa Rosa. I was at the hospital with Susan and Olivia. Aimee brought Sierra from Valley Ford that morning. Grandma Aimee got Sierra all dolled up, putting her in a pink dress. On the way they stopped for breakfast. Inside Sierra loudly exclaimed to the entire room "I have a new baby sister". Everybody clapped and cheered. My Mom was thrilled to tell us this story when she came to the hospital. We were thrilled to hear it and Sierra was overjoyed with everything, especially Olivia. After only 12 hours, Susan & Olivia were discharged from the hospital. We all went out for lunch at our favorite Chinese restaurant. Aimee was amazed at Susan's stamina and how relaxed she was. Susan was a real pro at this point and serenely breastfed Olivia at our table while eating food herself. It was a happy day for us all. While Aimee was with us she loved to change Olivia's diaper. She would rub baby oil all over Olivia for the longest time. I think she sometimes did it for more than a half hour. She would just rub her, sing and talk to her, kiss her all over. She was really overjoyed and the rest of us were too, just watching her and Olivia. My Mom stayed for another month or so and then went back to Long Beach. She stayed at her apartment for a short time and then moved in with Andre and Sharon and "the boys". She was with the Mathews for about 6 years. Aimee then moved in with Lynne & Ian on the 51st street house that I had built. She stayed here for about 2 years.

In 2002, Aimee moved to Sebastopol and lived with Susan, Sierra, Olivia and me. She stayed with us for 6 years. Aimee was particularly great with kids - always. In a lot of ways she was just a kid herself. Her mindset was easy going and knew how to have fun. She could entertain herself and others with very simple things. Sierra and Olivia really loved interacting with Aimee and did all kinds of fun things with her. This was also a very pivotal time in Sierra & Olivia development and Aimee had an enormous impact on them. We all enjoyed living with Aimee; she was a real spiritual force in her own subtle quiet way. However she wanted a space/home that was just her own, that she could afford. She wanted to be the Queen of her own castle. Don't we all want/desire something similar? In 2008, she moved into Luther Burbank housing apartment complex in Sebastopol. This was subsidized housing for elderly and she had a one bedroom apartment. The complex probably had 75 apartments. Everything was subsidized – gas, electric, water, heat, TV, Phone, internet and RENT, together it was about \$400 per month. Aimee loved it here and made lots of great friends. For the 4 years that she lived here; I would come over for breakfast almost every Saturday. It was only one mile away from my house. We had coffee; my Mother loved brewed strong coffee with cream – no sugar. We ate food and we would play Boggle, cross word puzzles or card games, but primarily talk; sometimes into the afternoon. I always looked forward to this time with her and I know she love it too. We would do excursions here and there for shopping or whatnot. However, she loved walking around cemeteries reading headstones. I liked it too; but mostly I just liked being with her. We had a fantastic Saint Patrick Day birthday party in 2012 for her. It was in her apartment complex clubhouse; we served corned beef and cabbage and all the fixings to 200 or more people. All of the family worked very hard to pull this event off – shopping, cooking, cleaning, serving, decorating, ushering, band setup and many other chores. It was her last birthday. All of her children and grandchildren were at this celebration; along with lots of friends. There was terrific live music by family and friends. It lasted upwards of six hours. We were all thrilled with this party and said so often – and we are still talking about it. About 8 months later, Aimee surrendered to congestive heart failure and COPD.

She knew the end was near; we all did. She wanted to die at home and not in a hospital. I stayed with her 24/7 for the last week she was alive. She died in her apartment on 11-12-12. Most all of the family was there for the last few days. It was a gripping experience; filled with sorrow, but most of all tender love. She was 87 years old. Her mind was clear as a bell to the very end. Lynne still lives in this apartment complex today.

When I was growing up, my friends and other people that came to my house, would often say something like: “Your Mother is really nice”. I would think to myself – “yeah, yeah, everybody’s Mother is like that”. Well, come to find out; not everyone’s mother was like that. My Mother was really nice to everyone almost all the time. The thing that I learned, increasingly as I grew older, is that Aimee had superpowers. I talked previously about some of her characteristics. However, I would like to try, and reach for a little more depth. One of her superpower was to listen when another person talked. Ok, you say, everybody listens. Actually, that’s not quite true. Listening and hearing are two separate things. You can hear sounds, but when you listen you absorb meaning along with the sound. Therein lays a big difference. Many just hear partially what’s going on around them. Beethoven said that music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy. What he meant is that emotion and ideas could be transmitted in music that words cannot equal or ascend. Some people hear a symphony and say that’s nice; other people hear the same symphony and cry or laugh or rip their hair out. When you listen attentively, intently, meaning can grow progressively.

One thing I have noticed in my own life; sometimes, when I am talking to another person; we don’t “hear” each other. What I mean is that I will say something, and then the other person interprets back to me what I said – and – that is not what I meant at all. I didn’t say that at all or only partially. I have noticed this same experience in other people too. Not being on the same page is a very common experience. Real listening is an art. Other

arts like a musical instrument, painting and acting take determination, discipline and lots of practice. You have to work at it. So does listening. If you listen keenly, slowly, you are likely to hear more accurately, and what you do hear has more compelling meaning.

Aimee gave you her complete focus when you talked to her. She absorbed what you said, but ironically in a kind of effortless way. She would give a soft smile with easy eyes and occasionally gesture with her head, slowly, and she might say – ahuh. I noticed many time people were surprised that she was really listening to them. I often heard comments like – “your Mother is nice to talk to” or “easy to talk with”.

My Mother cultivated another superpower of doing things slowly. She wasn't slow, but she chose to do things slowly. Well, how did she do that? I think it's a bit tricky to understand. I am not quite sure I do. However, just like a comma, slows, down a sentence. You can insert a pause into your thinking. Aimee deliberately let things meld gradually. She built a habit in doing things more easy-going, in a calm sort of way. She put commas into her thinking and actions. She learned pause, I think, in reaction to her father; because he would say the most contemptible things. Those encounters, stunned her, and they were an epiphany. Her father's foul words and screams were so absurd and shameful. It gave her time, to feel and absorb, and she felt compassion for another person in pain. She heard his words, and beneath them she felt his anguish; he was really crying for help. This is how, I think, Aimee really learned to listen to other people. She had an ability to slow down to hear something beneath or below words; more than just the words. Listening and slow are kind of, or, can be crafty close together. There is huge, world of difference, between acting slow and being slow. Many people forget to pause. I am guilty of this; I know I am in a rush often. When I do pause I can glean more meaning and surprisingly, enjoyment. Everything, literally and figuratively, tastes better when I do it slowly. I can savor life on a deeper level.

An additional superpower my Mother had was love. Love has been described by every poet and philosopher for the last 250,000 years, probably longer. An important dimension of love is humility. Humility is directly related to our capacity to love. If you think too highly of yourself; it becomes harder to share your love with someone else. Other people become less worthy of love and we deny them ours. Our capacity to love is also directly related to forgiveness. Forgiveness allows love to flourish and grow. Humility and forgiveness are closely related, but not too close. Maybe they are just cousins. The complexity of love is immeasurable; to grasp its dimensions requires focus and study in many areas. However, many of us don't hear, see, taste, touch and smell the full blossom of love. I think love is one of the most challenging things to understand about life; maybe the toughest. Let me try, and explain this complex idea/phenomenon by analogy. How much do we know about mathematics? My simple answer is - not very much. In the last 400 years math has tripled in volume, if not more. In the next 400 years it will more than triple again. When artificial intelligence really kicks in – it will go off the charts. And, at that point, we will still only be at the very beginning. The sky is the limit for math, both literally and figuratively. It is the same with love; both math and love are infinite. We are only at the starting line of grasping the fullness of love. We have definitely had some savants like the Buddha and Jesus. Human beings are just beginning to see how vast love is. We have a way to go; the horizon of love keeps expanding.

However, I don't think love is as easy to study as mathematics. I think it is more complex and confounding than math. If you are going to love, you must have courage; you must be brave. You can get hurt, and, it may be frequently. If you are going to love someone, you have to put your heart on a table, and think, and say: "Please don't hit it". It is painful when you get hit. What do you do when someone hits you? Well, if it's physical, hopefully you learn to duck. If it's emotional, do you retreat? Ignore? Cry? Scream? Hit back? What? It is a good question to ask yourself before you encounter

or go on any emotional path. Having an outlook or disposition towards love is a useful tool like a ladder, to climb higher. If you want to climb up, know your vehicle/path to get loftier. An emotional path is a kind of tool, or guideline, or type of map. Aimee had a great map and it served her well. She followed the golden rule; the same guideline that Buddha and Jesus talked about. Aimee was not a Buddha or Jesus. However, she was an advanced student in and of the craft of love. Love is a craft, in the same sense that mathematics is. Love is a skill, just like math is a skill. As for myself, in relation to love, I would say my skill level is OK; I am a good student working on my arithmetic problems in the third grade. Aw, you might say, “don’t be so hard on yourself; you belong in the fourth grade”. Gee, thanks for the promotion. When do I get to high school, I’m 72? My Mother had a PHD in love. And, she had it early on. She got better with age. She had her setbacks; I observed them firsthand. She flunked some tests, here and there. But, overall, she was Usain Bolt, on steroids; she outran everybody, when it came to love. If I knew her secrets; I would be a gazillionaire, or King of North and South America combined. Or, all of the above. But, I will tell you this – she travelled slow. I think this is crucial; but moving slow is not as easy as it may appear.

One thing I have to tell you about my Mother, which many do not know. Is that she cried often. People who were close to her, knew this well. I think she did this her whole life, or, as long as I can remember. My Mom could cry at the drop of a hat. For example, the whole family would watch a sad movie on TV; and maybe in the middle or at the end, she would be crying. She was quiet about it and always had a handkerchief handy to cover it up and she tried to hide it. She read books all the time in undisturbed places like her bedroom; and I could sometimes find her crying. She would be talking on the phone to a friend or relative and she be crying. My father absolutely loved this about her; we all did. He would hug and kiss her and say: “Aw, Emil Mae, it’s all right”. She hated the name Emil and that would give her a chuckle through her tears. I actually loved it when she cried. I could feel the depth of her emotions and expressions and it was profound;

especially if I was the reason she was crying. Beethoven was right; the music of her tears was higher in meaning than all words and philosophy. My Mom would say to us – “it’s ok, these are happy tears”. However, they weren’t always happy tears. I had many beautiful experiences in which we cried together under both good and bad circumstances.

I know I am rambling on about how great my Mother was; and, some of you are ready to puke. You are thinking – “I get it. She was great, God bless her; but you (Robert) are a shit head and please shut up now”. OK, OK I hear you; but I am going to tell you a completely fictional story, that I am making up which illustrates her:

Aimee is at Costco doing some shopping and on her way out she buy a slice of pizza and walks over to a table where a young man is sitting alone, one of the few tables with an open spot, eating a hot dog and soda. Aimee says, “Hi, can I share this table with you”? “Sure, no problem” He replies. Aimee says, “The store is crowded today”. He says, “busy, busy, busy, after Christmas rush and returns”. Aimee says, “That’s a nice shirt you’re wearing”. He says, “Thanks, my mother got it for me for Christmas”. Aimee says, “She has good taste”. “Thank you, I really like it”. He says. “It fits you perfectly and it is artistic”. Aimee said. “Yeah, I think my Mother wants me to be something more than I am”. He says. “Well, I am a Mother and we all want the best for our children”. Aimee said. “I know, but I don’t know what to be, and I am certainly not crazy about what I am doing now”. He says. “What are you doing”? Aimee asks. “I work in a store selling shoes”. He said. “Well, that’s a noble profession, you should be proud of yourself”. Aimee says. “For what, putting shoes on people’s stinky feet”? He asks. “For helping people feel better about life; you obviously have a great sense of fashion. That is an important skill and you help them make wise decisions.” Aimee says. “Yeah, I guess, but what about decisions for me”? He asks. “Well, what do you like to do”? Aimee asks. “In High School I took a bunch of art and made some pretty cool stuff”. He said. “That’s terrific.

Are you still doing it”? She asks. “No, I don’t think you can make money at it and I don’t want to starve”. He said. “You would be surprised; you know Picasso was 21 before he started doing art. How old are you”? She asked. “20”. He said. “You see, you are already ahead of Picasso. Be practical, but live your dream, you can do it part time after work and it will make you happy. And who knows, it may open doors; at the very least it will open the door to your heart”. Aimee said. “Huh, you know, you’re right; I am going to get out my art stuff tonight, what was your name”? “Aimee” “I’m George; you made my day, I hope to see you here again”. “My pleasure George, I hope so too”.

Well, I know it’s a little corny, but Aimee was like that – simple but nice. She tried to make people feel good about themselves; especially when she detected they weren’t. She also focused on other people, not to hide herself, but bring them out – make them blossom. She wanted others to feel good – it made her feel good. She wanted other people to shine – she was not complicated, but she was effective. All of the above superpowers have a close and overlapping relationship to each other; and yet, they are all distinct – listen, slow, love. Over Aimee’s entire life there were hundreds of people that really, really loved her. Personally I am hoping for 20, and, I don’t know if I will make my number. I miss my Mom.

Below is a picture of Aimee at 19 years old - Love to all.

