

DR. BERRY'S FUNERAL SPEECH, Claire Chaney

Indeed, Gabriel has now blown his horn for our beloved Dr. Margaret C. Berry. Two weeks ago she was paraded into Heaven to be cradled in God's everlasting arms. I suspect Gabriel was thinking, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

She was the Zesty Guru of Mentoring to a tsunami of Surrogate Children. It was my great blessing to be one of them. She nicknamed ME her Chambermaid, (while I preferred the title Hand Maiden). That was her playful sense of humor. Occasionally, in speeches, she would offer to return to my son Brent, some breast milk I'd left in her freezer when she babysat him 20 years before. Brent wisely declined.

Dr. Berry had those wide-set EYES that exuded spark and spunk. While with her, you'd absorb her passion for THE University of Texas.

Like the meaning of the words on its seal: the cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy.

Like the biblical inspiration etched on UT's Tower: "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free."

AND like the cultural importance of things like "panty raids" for a fully-rounded student education.

Dr. Berry also OOZED adventure!

Like when she enthusiastically encouraged a Chinese Firedrill at a traffic stop.

AND, when she willingly participated in a Murder Mystery train trip where everyone thought she SURELY was the LEAST probable so therefore MOST suspected murderer,

AND, when she, dressed as a witch, joined me, as Lady Godiva, for dinner on the town on Halloween.

YET, she was ALWAYS the consummate lady. When excited or frustrated, her most ferocious cuss word was, “GOOOLLLY!!!” Dr. Berry’s passion for UT and deep religious faith inspired her to view students with unconditional love. She accepted each one’s individual attributes. Her goal was to unleash us as better human beings, prepared to start here, then change the World in our own unique way.

This reminds me of the saying, “God loves you JUST the way you are...but He loves you too much to let you stay that way.” Dr. Berry’s sentiments exactly!

I spent the last two days of her life at her bedside, holding her, kissing her cheek, stroking her hair, and calling our gathering one big slumber party. I described her coming reunion with her beloved parents, arms wide open to receive her. This brought a huge smile to her face.

Once we knew the end was near, she allowed me to let people know, but firmly declined visitors. Her message was “Love to all.” I interpreted this as a cherished goodbye as well as an instruction on how to live: “Love to all!”

Knowing how many people wanted to offer last wishes, I suggested that they text me their messages so that I could share them with Dr. Berry. Please realize your impact on her final moments – she would grin each time I read a tender message. In fact, as I read the last message, she let out the most amazing sigh of absolute peace. This was her last breath.

For the next hour, I lay next to her beautiful, worn-out body that had served her so well – until the Funeral home picked her up in the reverent manner all of us would have hoped for her.

Now her pretty wide-set earthly eyes are closed. But her Guardian Angel EYES are wide open and upon us ALL the live long day. I pray that when Gabriel eventually blows his horn for each of us, that thanks in part, to her Zesty Guru Mentoring, we too might be blessed to hear, “well done, good and faithful servant.”