

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

#69 • Season 3 • Episode 8

10/29/2025

In Memoriam

Our Hosts

Janet Cheyne McMahon is a lover of family, dogs, nature, travel, books, and music. Born south of the Mason-Dixon line, she left after 9 months for parts north, landing eventually in Michigan, which will always be “where I’m from.”

Love of learning led Jan to a Bachelor of Arts (History, Political Science) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (Go Blue), and a Master of Arts (Library and Information Science) at the University of South Florida. Amid all that, studied for a time with Rob at Colorado State University, a pivotal time in their lives.

Worked at the U of M-Dearborn Library, and then The Salvation Army Florida Divisional Headquarters, with the greatest reward being in serving as the Divisional Librarian. A librarian is who Jan is “in my soul.”

Jan and Rob have made our home in Florida since 1983, and live now in retirement with their dog, Skye, who makes it all the best adventure. They travel as much as possible, spending time in nature and in diverse places on this amazing planet. It has all been, and continues to be a fascinating journey, with hope of making a difference, in small ways, by being brave enough to speak and act on behalf of others.

Rob McMahon is a native Michigander, born in Saginaw and raised in the suburbs of Detroit. Rob attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He did graduate studies at the University of Michigan and the University of South Florida. Rob is retired, having spent 36 years in public education teaching both high school chemistry and biology and middle school science. He worked as a total quality management trainer for the Pinellas County School District and served four years as the president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Rob cofounded a non-profit total quality management training center, The Learning Co-op, for Teacher Unions interested in applying the W. Edwards Deming continuous improvement principles to their day-to-day operations. He worked with teacher unions in Colorado, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas and Michigan. He also worked in a similar capacity with Jim Shipley & Associates. In retirement Rob has written a series of science related children’s books, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Jan, and their Black Labrador Retriever, Skye.

Deanna Cheyne, born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Toronto (1996), studying with such luminaries as Elmer Eisler, Doreen Rao, Greta Kraus, Lois Marshall, and Rosemarie Landry.

Dee taught music at Mississauga Christian Academy, served as music director for Meadowvale Bible Baptist Church (Mississauga, Ontario), served as Assistant Divisional Music Director for The Salvation Army in Florida, is a former member of Tampa’s Master Chorale, and, for the past 18 years, has been a public school teacher.

Dee has visit 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and 12 countries. Her favorite destinations include France, Prague, New Orleans, National Parks, & Hawaii.

Dee & Jim live in Florida with Brigus (Golden Retriever) and Pip (Teacup Yorkie).

James Cheyne, born in Galesburg, Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from Michigan State University (1978); and a Master of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign (1981), studying with David Liptak, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnston.

Jim has served as music director for The Salvation Army in Central Illinois & Eastern Iowa, Orlando Area Command, and the Florida Division, served as a pastor with The Salvation Army, and was a public school teacher for 17 years.

In travel so far, Jim has visited 50 states and 27 countries. His favorite travel destinations include National Parks, New Orleans, Newfoundland, Argentina, Prague, & France.

Jim continues to write music and support Dee’s musical endeavors, and cooks whenever absolutely necessary. Jim & Dee live in Florida with their dogs Brigus & Pip.



L-R: Brigus, Jim, Deanna, Skye, Jan, Rob.
Inset: Pip

In Memoriam

#69 - Season 3; Episode 8

10/29/2025

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim.

| We remember Ethel Mae (Robb) Cheyne, Jan & Jim's mom, on the 30th anniversary of her passing. These few craps are not enough. Volumes could be written.

[Music]

JIM: Halloween, All Hallow's Eve, 1995. I'm living down in South Tampa. Dad is with you, and you give me a call. We should get to Mom right away. And I did not get there in time. You guys came out of the front door and had to tell me that we had lost her on Halloween, and I don't know who it was that said that would have been Ethel's sense of humor. And they called it Witches Day. So what generation of people would call Halloween Witches Day? But that's - that's when we said goodbye to Mom. So it's 30 years ago this Halloween But I have a question for Jan, and this will determine whether we continue with this podcast or don't, because if she can get by this question, it's smooth sailing. In what way are you least like Mom?

JAN: Oh my gosh. I'm more likely to engage strangers in conversation. Uh that makes me more like Dad, I think. I greet people that I see in the grocery store. Now, maybe a younger Mom would have done that.

JIM: Do you think she was overshadowed by that in Dad who is very outgoing?

JAN: I do. I've been thinking of that recently.

JIM: Yeah.

JAN: That some of how we know her w was a shift because when I would meet people that knew her when she was younger, they would talk about her sense of humor. They would talk about those aspects that were brighter to me than what we saw later on. I - is that the right answer? [laughing] I don't know.

ROB: Who'dya get that from?

JIM: Is that the right answer. Well let's - let's Google that and see.

JAN: The insecurity? That comes from my dad.

ROB: Okay. I was gonna ask, I don't remember your mom showing, um, a lot of emotion. I think that's another way that maybe you're a little different than she was. I mean she held it in. I know she felt it. I don't remember seeing it.

JIM: I never remember an angry word from my mother at all. But there were certain looks, or lack of them, that communicated everything. I've - I've let someone down here was the way it worked.

JAN: First of all, she was private. And you've got that in an extreme over there across the table from me. Um, he is more- more like Mom that way. She was trustworthy. She was confidential. And so, all those things, also let - were part of that being private. If you told my mom something and no one was supposed to know, you could trust that. It's the same with Jim. If you tell him something and say, don't tell anybody, it's locked.

ROB: Well you're like that too.

JAN: I'm less like that. I'm more likely...

ROB: I mean you'll tell me.

JAN: Yeah, well I wish...

ROB: I mean you, you keep confidences with your friends.

JAN: Yeah. But my mom was on steroids. Because during the whole divorce of our parents, not ever did she breathe a critical word about my father to us. So all that to say she never threw my dad under the bus. She protected that relationship, both with us kids and publicly

JIM: And if I could add in, she actually came to his defense during that time, too. There was one time when Dad, who had this history of going to CMI every year since 1936, it was a long streak and he was serving out there all that time. And then there was one year that he was forbidden from going, by his Corps Officer because they were separated, and so his Corps Officer - our Corps Officer - said that he couldn't go because of a morals charge. That's when Mom and went and talked to him and said, "You know that's not true. You know what that means." "Well, I just think it's immoral." "You know what that phrase means, and you should not be using that against him." So she defends him because she seems to know what's the right thing to do. I mean, she was not the life of the party, but she was great to have at a party because she could laugh - like, you were just showing me a picture this morning of their wedding. There she is in full-on laughter. The thing is, it's a black and white from 1947, but I can hear it. I can hear that laugh. How do you think you're most like her?

JAN: I think I, um - two things. Mom, I think had a very logical, critical thinking mind. She could have been an attorney. easily because she could put together an argument for a case. She could make a case. Dee's like, you're like that. Jim's like that. Rob's sorta like that. No, you are. But she could put together the argument because when she was in school she took debate. So she knew how to frame it. When she goes to our Corps Officer to make the case about Dad, she's not just playing on emotion. She's playing on what the words mean and the facts of the matter. When she was employed by the school board of Garden City, and she was not paid equitably, and she had to make a case for why this was unfair, unjust. So she put together a whole argument which I've been searching for diligently.

JIM: She wrote it down?

JAN: Yeah. Somewhere I've seen it. I but I can't find it right now. Anyway. So I I was so impressed with that. She made the case for why she was not being paid fairly. And she presented her arguments, and, and I had to do that when I worked for the Army. I was paid less than the people who reported to me, who were male. And I had to make an argument for, and I used her as an example. Well I used knowing that she had done that as an example to me, that it was important to make that argument. And I - I won. I d I didn't ever get paid more, but they brought my salary up to be equal to the people who reported to

me. So.

JIM: This letter that you showed me from her older brother Paul, who was already a Salvation Army officer, he was a captain. She's just been commissioned, and he's giving her some advice. And he says, you know, there are flaws all over the place. We all know it as officers kids. We know what the organization's like. So when you start to get discouraged or when it looks a little bit like, ugh, this is not the real mission that I was hoping it would be - He suggests a sense of humor.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: As a salve for that. A balm you might find in Gilead. I remember on Mom's desk at the Board of Education, and because her name is Ethel, she had clipped a gasoline ad out of the paper, and there on her desk, what did it say?

JAN: "Ethyl for the price of regular."

JIM: "Ethyl for the price of regular."

JAN: Quickly though, for those who don't know, ethyl gasoline is like premium gasoline.

DEE: Okay.

JAN: She made the point using humor, which is the secret to helping people think. Make 'em laugh, and then they'll they'll think about it. One of the poems I read to you earlier today that she had kind of as an inspiration, she talked about "give me a twinkle in my eye." Well she had that.

JIM: Yeah. Which is not the same as being a pushover.

JAN: No.

ROB: No.

JIM: Because there there was iron behind that. My favorite poem of hers, um, was this one. It was, "God gave us two ends with a common link. With one we sit, with the other we think. Success depends on which you choose. Heads you win, tails you lose." And that was Mom.

ROB: Yup.

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: Mom used to tell me you catch more flies with honey than vinegar. It was a saying that she had, you know. And I think in a way I used to try to figure out how to accompl - get my message heard at work. And t hat was her advice to me was you'll do better if you frame it that way, you know? Now my Aunt Anita, on the other hand, said to me, "Make them think it's their idea and they'll do it." And I'm a little bit stubborn in that, you know. The logic should win the day. This is my this is in my way of thinking, the argument should win the day. In Anita's wisdom, she understood there was m there was more to it than that.

DEE: So women have to think more strategically and more, "You've got to do things that may minimize you in order to get what you want." And when I say minimize, like making it - making them think it's their idea...

JAN: Yeah.

DEE: ...when it's really yours. And you're willing to let someone else take credit, you know, women have to do that, which is unfortunate.

JAN: Yeah. She was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1917.

JIM: She was the, um, one, two, three, fourth of five children...

ROB: Yup.

JIM: ...and - of Salvation Army parents. Now it's - at that time Wichita Falls would have been under the Chicago command. What about her brothers? Like I mentioned Paul, her oldest. He was an officer.

ROB: And Loyd was an officer, her second - second oldest. George, we think, went to training. There's no record of him ever being an officer.

JIM: We've never met George.

ROB: No, never met George.

JIM: He was away from the family for reasons that we've never known and Mom didn't mention. And so after George, there was Mom...

ROB: Mom.

JIM: ...and then eventually...

ROB: Frank.

JIM: ...Uncle Frank.

ROB: And the only reason we know about George - that I know about George - is through Frank. He he and, uh, Rowanna had the closest relationship to him after he left everything.

JAN: You know, knowing what we know now, it's interesting to look back because I think my grandpa Robb, my mom's Dad, was a fairly austere person. Listening to my Uncle Frank tell stories, assuming that his memory is correct, he was a fairly strict guy. And I think Mom, being the girl, softened some of that with her. She - she didn't bear the brunt like the boys did. There may have been, I - I'm pretty sure there were - there was physical punishment for getting out - drawing outside the lines. Very different than our upbringing was. And Mom was never like that. She - she expected us - okay, so she expected us to tell the truth and to be responsible and follow the rules. So when we were little, I don't remember what we did to get in trouble. It must have been your fault, Jim. But I know we did something, as the story will show. We were very little and she sat us on chairs in the kitchen and said we had to stay in our chairs. Did you want to add to this story?

JIM: I'll correct you in a moment.

[Laughter]

JAN: Okay, fine. I've heard this. No! And she went down into the basement, I believe. And I got up out of my chair and moved around and then went back to my chair and she knew it. She knew one of us had gotten up and she came up and asked us Which one? And I told her it was Jim.

ROB: That's the girl I married.

JAN: I know! I bold face lied.

JIM: I don't need to correct any of that. I'll add in the it was a there was a ball.

JAN: Thank you. There was a reason.

JIM: There was a reason. And there was the ball was and she just said, "Just sit there, no one get out of your chair, [while I] go downstairs." But I do know my feeling is, when you got up, I thought, "Oh no, Jan's in trouble. Oh no, she can't do this. Oh, Jan, don't do this. Oh, Mom's coming upstairs. Jan's back in her seat. Oh no, oh no, oh no. We just won't say anything." We probably were really noisy, but for us it is the mystique of she knew things that no one else knew. She was tied into the universe in ways. The force was with her. And so she comes up and wants to know what had happened. And I'm just thinking, "Oh, don't ask me, don't ask me." And that's when Jan just said, "He got up." And that that has defined our relationship since.

[Laughter]

DEE: See that's the difference between you two and my siblings. I, like, if it were my household, we would all been, before Mom asked the question. It was, "They did it. They did it. Punish them."

JIM: You're so impolite, you Canadians.

JAN: You Canadians. They're Newfoundlanders. That's it.

DEE: That's right. Don't mess with a Newfie.

JAN: That's the difference, right there.

ROB: So you were born in Galesburg. And Jan was born in - well, Fort Leonard Wood.

JAN: Rolla.

ROB: Rolla, yeah.

JIM: Actually it says...

JAN: Fort Leonard Wood.

JIM: ...Fort Leonard Wood.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: Because it was a always the question of - were you on the base?

JAN: At one point I found the bill from the cost of my birth. And it was like eight dollars and something at the Army Base Hospital.

JIM: Okay. So just to continue Mom's arc of life, so she's a at home and following her parents around wherever they were stationed with The Salvation Army, that was her home. And then in 1938, she has just turned 21, and she goes to the training college in Chicago to become

a Salvation Army officer. And at that time, the training college was a one-year program. And her session was called...?

JAN: The Dauntless Evangelists.

JIM: Dauntless Evangelists. And then was commissioned as a probationary lieutenant in '39. Now I don't know exactly what that meant. But I remember her parents were commissioned as probationary lieutenants because they were married, and the Chicago Training College did not have facilities for married people, so they never went to training. They were put immediately as assistants in the Corps as probationary lieutenants, and the letter to it is quite stark. It says, "You're going to be a probationary lieutenant, and after a year we'll evaluate things." And then it said, "Don't sell your furniture."

[Laughter]

JIM: "Put it in storage. Don't don't sell anything. This may not work out." But they were then commissioned as - as full lieutenants after that period. And that's what happened with Mom. And you have her actual commissions here, don't you?

JAN: Yeah, I do. This is her first appointment when it was in a little envelope - you know when you would go across the stage and get your first appointment? - to Indianapolis No. 3, the Belmont Corps, appointed to assist. "Cadet Ethel May Robb to the rank of probationary lieutenant. June of 1939."

JIM: When did she become an a full lieutenant then?

JAN: Then she became a full lieutenant in 1941, February of 1941, commissioned Officer of The Salvation Army.

JIM: So she has her time as an officer until she marries Dad in September of '47.

ROB: So where did they - they...?

JAN: They met in Chicago.

ROB: When she was at the training school or when she was at THQ?

JAN: One of the two. She was at the training college and at THQ working in the chief's office.

JIM: Right. Right.

ROB: You don't know what she did at the at the, uh, training college, do you?

JIM: You mean as an officer?

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: No. I know what she did as a cadet. She snuck out once.

ROB: Did she?

JIM: It was a group that had gone out, and then came back and it was - do you remember Colonel Pepper?

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: He was whatever rank he was there, I think about captain. She tells this story. They had stopped and gotten some burgers. She was carrying them in. Everyone kind of goes and Albert Pepper starts talking to her and she's got the bags behind her back. And so he just is carrying on a kind of casual, when will this end? sort of conversation. It's very pleasant. "Oh yes, Captain. Oh yes. Oh yes." "Well, cadet, you know..." and then she said, and then he said, "Have a pleasant evening. And enjoy the burgers."

[Laughter]

JAN: Ah, see, again, humor works.

JIM: Well, and Colonel Pepper, as I remember him, he was a gem of a man.

JAN: Yes.

JIM: He was quite a saint, and he he would understand, you don't call a cadet for getting burgers.

ROB: No.

JIM: That's the only story I know about Mom in training. And so she has these appointments. She meets Dad. They're married in '47. He's going through school at Northwestern. And then in '52, he ends up in the army. And that's when they're at Fort Leonard Wood. And then you come along in '53, St. Stephen's Day, and he is discharged. September 29th, 1954. I know that they were in Galesburg by October 16th. Do you know why I know they were in Galesburg by October 16th?

ROB: No.

JIM: Because they bought some furniture.

JAN: Oh!

JIM: Two dressers...

JAN: Yes!

JIM: Two dressers, two nightstands, and a bed. And they bought this furniture in 1954. And Mom lined the drawers of the dresser with The Register-Mail, which was the Galesburg thing. And why do I know that? Because it's still in there.

JAN: I love that.

JIM: This is the furniture in our bedroom...

DEE: I know.

JIM: ...but the bed is in the corner room now. And I looked in there and the newspaper is still there, and it says October 16th, 1954. And so then I come along a year later in '55. Dad is teaching at Lombard, and we're at The Salvation Army, but he's not really so happy with The Salvation Army. There wasn't music there, it was a small core. So he ended up at Coventry [cn: Covenant] Church, and he's leading the choir there. And I have the hymnal that they presented to him when we left and went to Garden City in 1961. And that got us to The Salvation Army in Detroit Citadel, which was at the time, I think, the largest Corps in the country. Cambridge Junior High was a brand new thing. They needed a band director.

Dad got the job, and that's how we ended up in Michigan, so that you could eventually meet Rob.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: While Dad is teaching at Cambridge Junior High, Mom gets a job at the Board of Education. She was a secretary there. That's where her retirement came from, right?

JAN: She stayed at the Board of Education, but she didn't stay in the position of secretary.

ROB: No, she was a purchasing agent.

JAN: She was a purchasing agent for the school district.

JIM: So everything that was negotiated with vendors, that was her purview.

ROB: Is it true that we didn't realize that she was the president of her local union until much later?

JIM: I - I think that's right, Rob. Because I - I sort of get the idea of that she was the president, and I'm just thinking, ooh, we've got a president. And so Dad would take her to work. drop her off, then go to his school, and then pick her up and bring her home, and then somehow dinner appeared on the table.

DEE: Moms are amazing.

JIM: If I had a time machine, what would I change? Or if Mom were here right now, I think I'd just have her sit while we prepared a meal for her. And I think I'd want it to be - if we dared...

JAN: Meatloaf.

JIM: "Effie May's Superb Meatloaf." What did she say about the eggs? You add an egg, Dee, what did she say on it?

DEE: "Remove the shell for company."

JIM: "Remove the shell for company." You know she's got a twinkle in her eye when she's doing that.

So there I am in elementary school and they call Mom in for a conference and they said that, uh, "Little Jimmy is having trouble with his speech, we're going to put him in a special class." At that time, a special class was devastating. Okay? And I pitched a fit, and I remember this, but I was bawling my eyes out. And then my hero, Mom, came to the rescue. She talked to the teacher and said, "Look. Suppose I were to do lessons with him at home. Could we do that?" I don't know if it was wise, but I think the teacher just wanted me out of there, and so she agreed. And so Mom gave me speech lessons at home so I could form words correctly, under the idea that I would then be evaluated again. And whatever she did and whatever effort I put into it, I don't remember. I don't remember a single lesson at home, but they must have happened. It was Mom that allowed me to speak. I remember saying at her funeral that she was the one that helped me learn how to speak.

JAN: Yeah. You know what's interesting in that a category is that speech in general was important to Mom. The right use of language.

ROB: Language.

JAN: Knowing what words meant. Using the correct word. And she took Latin in school as a child. And so she was always very good at figuring out the definitions of words. And she cared that we spoke correctly and used the right grammar, which explains a lot of my brother's anal retentiveness about grammar, my lord. I did not...

JIM: And by that you mean attention to?

JAN: That's what I mean.

JIM: Okay.

JAN: I mean it's all in all positive ways.

DEE: He corrects TV shows and advertisements.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: Well if they're just if they're messed up, but I am horrible at it too.

JAN: No.

DEE: No, you're not.

JIM: No, no, no. Because I've - everything that I do correctly I've done because I've made mistakes on it a long time.

DEE: Okay.

JIM: And I went back and saw a Facebook post from 2016 and it has to do with Charles Ruggiero. He was the orchestration teacher at Michigan State. And I wrote a paper once. He said, "Your ideas are all good, but your writing is terrible. There's no way you have a career in academia if you write like this. You've got to fix it."

JAN: The other thing that we never could do was swear at home. And I remember getting in trouble and then I pushed the envelope further because, sometimes I would say the word G—d [bleeped] instead of gosh, and my mom would not tolerate that. That was a bad one. So I would do it intentionally 'cause I knew it bugged her.

DEE: Oh, you were bad, Jan.

JAN: I was. It was my mom. It's mother-daughter.

DEE: I would never have done that.

JAN: Oh, man, it's good stuff.

DEE: Oh my goodness, because my mother would've whooped me really bad.

JAN: I know, see she...

JIM: I don't I don't remember any swearing. Did you actually hear her swear?

JAN: So going back to the Alzheimer's, she said d—n [bleeped] one time at the nursing home. And I thought, "That's stunning." She had lost that filter. And to be honest, I suspect she swore at other times in her life because she did it then. Which is why when I get

dementia, watch out. I'm just saying because...

ROB: Like a sailor.

JAN: She did not swear. I never heard either of my parents Okay, Jim must have a story here.

JIM: These questionnaires like the Colbert questionnaire or the one that James Lipton used to do on the uh "Inside The Actors Studio," "What's your favorite swear word?" My answer would always be something Mom said and it wasn't a word, it was a phrase. And it was, "Heck to breakfast!" Heck to breakfast is as str - I mean, it's got the sounds of the words you want in there.

The one time I think Mom was sorry for helping me learn how to speak, we went to a hair salon. Mom in photos from her younger years, there's a slight brunette thing going on there, just a little bit brown maybe. But in her later years, she was blond. Okay. One day I'm standing with Mom and there are some other ladies around and they're just talking about stuff and Mom says she was gonna go get her hair done. And I said - I could have been five - "What color are you gonna get it done this time?"

ROB: *[laughing]*

JAN: Oh, jeez.

JIM: Which cracked up everyone. And Mom was kind enough to laugh along with it, and she never said a harsh word to me about that at all.

DEE: Well, it was innocent.

JIM: Except I just realized, "Maybe I shouldn't have said that." That's all I knew. So maybe that I could speak did not always reap the benefits that she had hoped for.

ROB: Your mom always looked classy to me. I remember Florida when we, um, would go at Easter time and we'd go to, um - uh, Kapok Tree. And it was this is a big deal and we get dressed up to go to a restaurant, you know? And, um, she always looked - I mean, didn't she wear gloves sometimes? White gloves?

JAN: Yeah.

ROB: She - and her hair was always perfect. We talked about Ethel Wright the same way.

JAN: It was she and Ethel Wright, no offense to your mom. It was she and Ethel Wright.

ROB: It's never my mom. I know that, um.

JIM: I remember Ethel Wright coming out of the Gulf once...

ROB: Out of the Gulf once.

JIM: ...having gone - and her hair was, "What happened to...?"

ROB: See I don't remember your mom like that. Do you?

JAN: No. I don't remember - She, she - of course, it was an era when women went to have their hair done once a week Somehow it stayed like that for a week, I don't know how. And my mom was like that. She always looked like she paid attention.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: There's one little photograph I took in my mind of Mom at CMI when someone came up to her and said, you're Ethel, right? She said, no, I'm Ethel Cheyne.

JAN: Ha, ha, ha. Good one. She was quick wit...

ROB: She was.

JAN: ...and through her Alzheimer's, that remained. She might not have told you what she ate for breakfast, but she had the comeback. She had the line that worked in conversation. And the other thing that stayed through Alzheimer's was her vocabulary. It stayed strong. It - she didn't lose that ability to, you know, use the correct word.

JIM: After they separated. I don't think either Mom or Dad stayed at the Corps very much. Mom had a friend from work - was it Dolores?

JAN: Mm-Hmm.

JIM: - who was a Seventh-day Adventist.

ROB: Right.

JIM: And so for a time Mom was attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I remember going to Mom's baptism. There she did get her hair wet. It was a full immersion baptism. I also remember they had a sacrament of foot washing...

ROB: Hmm.

JIM: ...which is one of these stunning things. I mean, still to this day, when I go to the communion rail - you're just changed. There are routines that just go by you every day and then one moment something comes out at you, and it grabs you and you don't know what it is? This was one of those moments, because I'm there and my feet are being washed by the senior elder of the church. I'm thinking, "Who am I that he should be washing my feet?" Well, it's just - it's a clear biblical lesson. Extraordinary. And so Mom was with the Seventh-day Adventist Church for a while, and I think that had to do with community more than theology.

JAN: Yes. Can we talk - I want to say something about Mom coping with living alone. I saw in her an independent - a willing to do things, even though they were out of her comfort zone, because she was that reserved person. But she didn't let that her stop her from from doing things in life. Plus, she also didn't suffer fools. She could read people really well. And when somebody was condescending to her because of her age or something - you know, underestimated her, which it was easy to underestimate my mom because she was quiet, she had a way of standing up to that. I remember we went to a, um, camper show and the salesman thinks it's cute to call my mom grandma.

DEE: No!

JAN: And I'm like...

DEE: Oh my goodness!

JAN: In my mind, what she said was, "I'm not a grandmother." I don't recall that she

answered it, but her whole demeanor changed.

DEE: Oh yeah.

JAN: It was, like, disrespectful of her. And we - we left that salesperson where they were. So, you know, she was brave and she would tra... - she went - she traveled with Loyd and Anita. She went to Europe. She went to Ober... - I can't say it, Jim.

JIM: Oberammergau?

JAN: That's it. And the Holy Land with Loyd and Anita as a single person, and embraced it all. She did the same thing by traveling with us to Alaska...

ROB: Yup.

JAN: ...and embraced it all. And never let the fact that she was there as an older single woman intimidate her into not doing something that everybody else was gonna do.

JIM: For all of her strength, you share a weakness with her. In our house, when Perry Mason came on...

JAN: [laughs]

JIM: ...she would have to leave the room, because Perry Mason was too tense a show for Mom to be in the room with. You would think it was a U of M football game, you know, when they're only up by forty with two minutes left. That's the kind of tension that Mom had in watching Perry Mason.

DEE: You'd not survive in our home.

JIM: Jan has to remove herself from certain tensions in - in, uh, cinema, uh, TV shows and that, uh football games.

JAN: Life, I think, is what it is.

JIM: In life, yeah.

JAN: I want Rob to watch first and make sure it's gonna be okay.

ROB: That's right.

JIM: I do that...

DEE: I just need to know the dog doesn't die.

JIM: That's it.

ROB: Well, yeah.

JIM: It just, does the dog die?

ROB: That's true.

JAN: One of the biggest things I would say - I'm gonna say that both Jim and I learned this from my mom - is we can stand on our own in our thinking. We - we think independently. And we're not highly influenced by whatever the thought of the day is, or who is speaking. We're going to be more interested in the logic of the argument. And if we come to a belief

or a - an understanding of something, we could stand alone with that understanding in the midst of a crowd of people who thought differently. So, that I get from my mom.

ROB: What are your favorite Ethel sayings? Ethel...

JIM: Ethel-isms?

ROB: Ethel-isms.

JAN: Well, Jim gave you his. "Heck to breakfast."

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: "Heck to breakfast," yeah. Her sense of humor came through in one joke. Dee.

DEE: Yes.

JIM: What is the difference between unlawful and illegal?

DEE: I don't know. What is the difference between unlawful and illegal?

JIM: Well, unlawful is anything that's against the law. And "ill eagle" is just a sick bird.

JAN: Oh, she loved puns, yes.

JIM: That's an Ethel joke. That - I heard that from her. She loved that one. Yeah.

JAN: She loves puns, plays on words.

ROB: She used the term "Pitiful Pearl" a lot, you know, when someone was sort of down in the mouth. "She's such a Pitiful Pearl." We learned a song from her. "I love you, a bushel and a peck."

DEE: Oh, my mommy taught me that one.

JAN & ROB: [singing] 🎵 "A bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck. A hug around the neck and a barrel and a heap. A barrel and a heap and I'm talking in my sleep about you." 🎵

[Laughter]

JAN: I bet that is gonna make the podcast.

ROB: That's an Ethel-ism.

JIM: If you're still with us...

[Laughter]

JIM: She was a singer. When we would go on vacations, every time we crossed a state line, there would be another song.

JAN: Yup.

JIM: And a song about this state.

JIM: We go into Indiana. [singing] 🎵 "Indiana, my Indiana." 🎵 Or she would say, [singing] 🎵 "Back home again in Indiana." 🎵 And so we'd go into another state. She would sing a

song about that.

JAN: She had that song where, uh, tell it. Tell that one.

ROB: What did Idaho?

JAN: He hoed ...

ROB: Hoed a Merry-land.

JIM: [singing] ♪ "What did Idaho, boys?" ♪ Merry-land.

ROB: He wore a New Jersey. You know, that kind of stuff.

JAN: My mom would have a song about each one, and made that fun. So.

JIM: When was she diagnosed with Alzheimer's?

JAN: One of our visits to Winona Lake, Rob and I went up for Christmas. And that was the first we were really aware that she was struggling, because we got there and it was almost like she was surprised to see us, and she wasn't ready for Christmas.

ROB: There were no decorations up, and it was like...

JIM: Yeah.

ROB: ...as a surprise to her.

JIM: The last sentence that I heard Mom say is, she looked at Rob and said, "I love you."

October 30th, 1995. That evening, I picked up Dad at the airport, because this was a call for the family to come together, and so Dad flew in and I picked him up from the airport. I'm gonna take him to your place. And I say, "Dad, why don't we stop by and see her?"

"No, we should just go to Jan and Rob's, and just -"

"No, no, I think I think we should go."

So we went. We were standing at the end of the bed and she was asleep And I broke down, and Dad put his arm around me. I remember that. So then I bring him to your house, drop him off, go off to my place in South Tampa, and it's the next morning and we get the call. And so we have to go and see Mom. She's now in a room across the hall. Something like a stroke or something had taken her.

Here's something about those who live with someone with dementia. It was a bit of a long road for her, a few years. And when you go back, you can trace the decline and how far back can you push it? Maybe a decade. After the service at the Corps, it was Rick, your pastor, who drove us to the cemetery. And all he wanted to do was put some music in, to kind of lighten things. We drove down to the cemetery for the committal service. And in the days after that, the Mom of dementia faded. And the Mom who we have pictures of laughing...

[music starts]

...telling jokes, writing silly things, keeping very interesting things, emerged again. Those are - those are the things. But anyway, uh, we were very lucky.

JAN: Yeah we were.

JIM: I'm sorry you didn't get to know her Dee. She would have liked you.

JAN: She would have liked you.

DEE: Oh, I'm glad to hear.

[Music ends]