

Dolores “Dory” Blefari

August 18, 1930 – January 2, 2024

Mom had a happy childhood, growing up in Pittsfield, MA in the beautiful Berkshires.

As a child, she loved riding her bike, ice skating (I think we still have her ice skates and if we do I have dibs on them Paula & Donna! and spending time with friends on many lakes, especially Lake Onota and Lake Pontoosuc.

Speaking of riding her bike ... she had a heart murmur and wasn't supposed to ride her bike so she would always tell the story on how she hid her bike in the cellar and would drag it up the stairs to ride with her friends.

Her mother, my grandmother, came from a large Italian family and was one of twelve kids. Consequently, mom had a lot of cousins, aunts and uncles around and spent a lot of quality time with them.

Their house was always filled with music – mom's dad, our grandpa, played the mandolin. Her sister Eleanor played the piano. And mom, she loved to sing and dance. One of her favorites was the Hawaiian dance.

For me, every year when we would watch the Wizard of Oz and for several months after she would sing me “Somewhere over the rainbow”. To this day it's my favorite song.

Her dad has his own barber shop and worked into his early 80's.

When mom and her sister wanted a new sweater, they would just visit the barber shop. They would open the cash register, take some cash and they were off to go shopping.

Mom was voted “Prettiest Girl” in middle school.

She graduated from Pittsfield High School in 1948 and worked at various jobs, one of her favorites as an usher at Tanglewood, an outdoor music venue in the Berkshires.

At 17, she met the love of her life, Paul Blefari, at a dance she was attending with her sister, Marie.

Mom told me this story countless times: she was standing against the wall talking with her sister Marie and aunt Marie said “Here comes WWII hero Paul Blefari - he's going to ask ME to dance” Dad went straight to mom and asked her to dance.

They were married on June 17, 1950, and shared 71 years together until Paul “Pappy” passed away in 2021. Mom and dad loved to dance, and throughout their life it wouldn't be uncommon that others would clear the dancefloor and they would have the spotlight.

They could often be found playing music and dancing in their kitchen after dinner.

For more job opportunities, mom and dad moved to California and settled in Oceanside, to be close to mom's sister, Marie. Marie's husband was a Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton.

In December of 1959, they moved to San Jose, CA, where Donna was born in April of 1960. Three months later, they bought their forever home in Sunnyvale, CA.

In 1965, mom took a part-time job at the Emporium for Christmas help which turned into a long-term, permanent, commission-based sales position in television and large appliances.

Mom was an active member of the PTA and an assistant Girl Scout Leader.

Mom's faith was strong. She took a five-year non-denominational bible study class and mom and dad were charter members of Church of the Resurrection in Sunnyvale, CA. She was a Eucharistic Minister both at mass and for the homebound.

She was a sponsor in RCIA for those converting to Catholicism.

She was a member and officer of the Italian Catholic Federation Branch 408 and a member and past president of the YLI Maureen Institute #136. In later years, mom became a member of the 100 Women Charitable Foundation, a local, philanthropic organization.

In 2001, mom had a cardiac arrest and was not expected to live.

We went to Stanford Hospital while she was in a coma and on life support for several days to figure out what the next steps were.

The same day we were there she had a miraculous, full recovery.

As I reflect on mom's life, I am reminded of the intricate roles within a family. She began as a cherished daughter, nurtured by her parents. Mom and dad then nurtured us 3 as our parents and as time passed, for those of us with older parents - we become caregivers to them. In our family both Paula and Donna did all the heavy lifting. As the worker bees they were favored by dad. I was off traveling, and I was the "fun parent" and was easily mom's favorite.

I visited once per week on a Saturday or Sunday dependent on football season and would take them both on what we called a "3-hour tour". Those were memorable drives together accompanied by the nostalgic tunes of Gilligan's Island. We never had a specific destination in mind – we just jumped in the car and drove. I did this for several years with both mom and dad – these outings created lasting memories that I treasure dearly.

Over these last 2 years mom and I shared these special "3-hour tour" moments together - just her and I.

We would talk and make phone calls to friends and family and on many drives, she would share the same stories with me.

Mom would share stories of her youth including one that she would always start by showing me her hands. She would say "look at my hands, I'm 93 years old and my fingers are still straight – did I tell you I was a hand model?" These memories remain etched in my heart as a testament to mom's enduring spirit.

Mom's most accomplished role in life was as a wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, and friend to many.

She insisted on learning how to text to stay in contact with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The Queen of our family will be greatly missed, but we are comforted in knowing that she and her beloved Paul are reunited and dancing with the angels in heaven.