

– Ann – Ann Dary – Ms. Johnson – Partner –  
– Bohemian – Drinking Buddy – Smokin' Buddy — Artist –  
– Guild Member – Community Advocate – Founder – Creeksider – Neighbor –  
– Friend – Marlborough Mom – Marine City Mom – Mom – Grandma – Frog –

How does one memorialize 32 years of friendship? If you do some complicated math based upon RENT's most famous song, its 16,819,200 minutes. That's a lot. But yet, even though she had 91 years, we'll forever yearn for more, because there will have been enough.

I moved into the Jefferson-Chalmers community in 1989. My first residence at 904, just north of the infamous Ashland Bump. In the spring of the next year, following major oral surgery when my mouth was rubber banded shut (yeah, imagine that), some lady showed up passing out fliers for something called the Citizens' District Council and an upcoming election. I think the slate of candidates included her. "What's a CDC?" I asked. She gave me that dead pan look as if should have already known. We had a quick exchange and she was off to the next address.

Like anyone that chooses to be engaged in our neighborhood, baptism by fire follows shortly after. Devil's Night Patrols, vacant parcel clean-ups, raucous community meetings. CDC and WISH – where the Waterfront Idea Sharing Homeowners weren't sure what they wished for. And, when a Program Officer at the Community Foundation asked, Ann back channelled with a drinking buddy from Marshall's Bar, a secretary at the funder, to help secure the first grant for a new organization. On a chilly Saturday in a vacant house she owned across the street from her home on Marlborough, Creekside was born.

Not much later, the cattail logo and brand she created found its way to the masthead of a newsletter, T-shirts, sweatshirts, signs, fliers and memories. She used her artisan skills to provide the tampon and condom art that was silk screened onto Fox Creek Catch of the Day T-shirts residents wore when picketing Grosse Pointe Park City Hall, protesting the raw sewage in our canals.

A partner of 9 years would join me on Ashland in 1993 and would have no choice to be pulled into community service. I doubt he ever thought he would be recruited into such a morass, but alas, he's still there engaged and supportive as ever. The classier version of what I could never be, he surprised her with flowers the last time we were altogether. Her face lit up and maybe flowers were a fitting tribute. Back in the day, he and I would get splashed as Casey's truck moved faster than it should have on a rainy day while we tried to fill planters on Jefferson with not anywhere near enough flowers.

He and Marlene proudly displayed their work in AB Ford and no matter what we were doing, Ann was right there – running around in her car checking on volunteers or getting last minute supplies, tools or refreshments. She drove like a demon, often, full-size General Motors beasts with large V-8s that would roar as she sped off and would lurch when she'd put them in Park before they came to a stop.

She recruited me to the what was then Jefferson-Chalmers Business Association and would later be a founding member of Jefferson East. She gladly grabbed a scoop shovel to remove debris from the second floor of an abandoned house Greg and I sought to restore and was chased out of the place

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when wasps erupted from insulation that had fallen on the floor following two fires that left a gaping hole in the roof. She shook her head so violently that her wig was slightly displaced.

You couldn't be her friend and not be recruited or embarrassed into service. Right – John? Her calm and seasoned hand provided guidance and was amongst a powerful pool of estrogen. Cindy, Casey, Suzanne, Mama Myrtle, Jeannie, Red, Marlene, Karen, Minnie, Monique, Carolyn, Samantha. Fellas, there's a long shadow of women who gave so much of their lives to their community. We will forever be challenged to step up our game.

But, when you're a leader, you set yourself up for criticism and you can be a target, where people will question your motives and attack, back stab and call you names. I could always look across the room and see her face taking from me the pain I experienced as it was transferred to her because I was required to maintain my composure, regardless of what vitriol was coming my way. Her quiet strength always present.

Throughout the time I knew her, she always had fun stories to tell and she reminded me that while everybody thinks the Hippies of the '70s were trend setters, before the Hippies there were Beatniks and before Beatniks there were Bohemians. People challenging convention when her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday preceded 1950, making her a member of that class of change makers. What kind of strength of one's person does it take to be OUT in the 1940s and '50s – to pursue someone you love, to not allow anyone to steal your joy or put you in a box.

And like all Hippies, Beatniks and Bohemians, alcohol and the herb were close by and likely the cause of why she woke up in the back seat of a station wagon parked in the driveway of last night's trick, whose name she didn't remember.

Her membership in The Guild provided protection and opportunities around the country where she could show up in ANY city and the local paper was REQUIRED to provide her work. That professional network of safety and commitment one to another likely gave her an understanding of the importance of the relationships that made for a strong community. Places she called home and as demonstrated as recently as two months ago, when the antique dealer on Water Street knew of a Frog that lived a few blocks away.

With modest roots in New England and love for Detroit originals, the contents of a Boston Cooler were always close at hand and when you shared that unique brew, you'd get a chance to hear the accent that was reminiscent of and heard in the region of her youth.

In January 2004, she drove me to fateful ER trip where a nurse was surprised, I was ambulatory with a 102 temperature and two weeks later, she would quietly hold my hand as she was the second to learn of a change in my HIV status. A few months later, she helped me host one of the largest community fundraisers for a mayoral hopeful who thanked Joe Juergensen for my efforts. Her solemn face in the crowd, once again, buttressing me to overcome the embarrassment.

In a large and beautiful home on a street filled with bricks, comfort filled the big living room couch, meals full of calories, cholesterol and love that filled your belly, wine that calmed your spirit and baked goods – and I don't mean desserts that freed your mind. With Mary at the end of a table too for the long for the space, it was placed on a diagonal. And, when gun shots sent her to the floor as a bullet pierced the pillow where she normally laid her head, it was time to leave.

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Her commitment to her community included a family with a partner she loved and often, tolerated. But, her presence at the birth of Mary's youngest created a special bond with a woman that continues her tradition of strength and leadership and was present when Sam became one of the highest-ranking female officers in Macomb County. Later, that day the Old Bird scanned her calendar and notes, wanting to know when we were going to see Sam. I showed her pics from the swearing in and advised we'd already been there and back. "Dammit, I losing it," she piped. "That's ok - Me too," was all I could say. Sam bore the burden of those lapses, but there is no regret. There is no regret.

John and Sam would have three boys and their dedication and love for their Frog – I still don't understand how she got that name – is unquestionable. Every conversation included an update on her grandsons and she reveled in the attention one drew to the person who influenced him the most in front of a few hundred that filled bleachers at his high school's football stadium. Cherish the art she made for each of you and know she was proud of all of you.

We know we're turning into our parents when some part or the majority of a conversation with a friend includes a review of recent health challenges. Following a recent urinary crisis where I had been given durable medical equipment to self-catheterize, I was discussing with Ann the pain, difficulties associated with insertion, but relief that followed.

A few days later, I received a hand sketch and instructions from a medical provider that directed the reader how to complete the procedure. Of course, the parts in the sketch belonged to a gender not my own and even though it'd been a while since I'd seen something that resembled the sketch, I did know what I was looking at – the practical joke of a dear friend.

A phone call, some foul language and uncontrollable laughter, followed. Before we hung up, she reminded me to make sure I had a supply of cranberry juice to avoid a urinary tract infection and every time I ordered that beverage in her presence, she'd shoot me a look and smile to remind me of a secret only we shared. Well, not anymore.

In the craziness of a pandemic and political silliness of 2020, a couple I know were turning 40. In an attempt to avoid that landmark, they suggested that since everybody was writing off that year, that they'd stay 39 for another year. So, in the spirit of that idea, I sent Ann a "Congratulations on Your New Baby Boy" greeting card for her 89<sup>th</sup> and she called me and said, 'Um, thanks, for the card, are you ok?' "Gotcha," was all I could think to say.

This year, I gave her a blank card, noting, she probably wouldn't remember what I wrote in it anyway. Earlier that day, when I called to sing her, "Happy Birthday," I asked her what she'd forgotten already that day. Her reply, a loud, "WHAT?"

There was always humor and love in the written messages we'd exchange and I've selected a couple to share.

**Mother's Day 2016:**

The Card's Cover:

*Mother's Day is a time for celebrating women who guide with strength and listen with love.*

Inside the Card:

*Wonderful women like you.*

What I Wrote:

Sam and your grandkids have the great benefit of your focused love, ears and heart. How fortunate were all the children of Creekside to bask in the glow of your wisdom, your intense, skeptical and discerning ears. They benefited from your strength of spirit, your sense of fairness – right from wrong, and your enormously large and strong heart.

A heart that gave so freely, that found time to serve as many Board rosters would prove. A fun heart that never let anything get in the way of a good time, a stiff drink and a puff to pass!!

You shoveled debris from my recently acquired and formerly abandoned home and were swarmed by wasps. Your face spoke volumes of stories about Beatniks, oops-I mean Bohemians <smile>, unfair politics and Red Skeleton look-alike contests.

A peer of my parents, for half my life (26/52 years), your voice brings support to my woes, calm to my troubles, warmth to my heart and a never, never, never, never ending love to my soul.

Geography will never matter. How lucky and fortunate am I to be a Creekside Kid!

MM->MCM

All my love –  
Jay

**October 24, 2016:**

The Card's Cover:

*Three wishes for your birthday  
Happy times  
Friends to love you  
Sunny skies to shine above you*

Inside the Card:

*wishing you everything beautiful on your special day*

What I Wrote:

Marlborough Marine City Mom

Three wishes isn't anywhere NEAR enough for what you deserve out from the menu of things life's smorgasbord has to offer.

And, I want your plate to be overflowing and for you to have as many trips to the buffet (and the bar) as you can possibly handle. Dine on life's riches. Drink up all the love coming your way. Bask in the glow and know, every day – cloudy or clear – is full of sun shine.

Because the rays emanating from you reflect back on you with the warmth of never-ending laughter, smiles, hugs and kisses.

Thank you for shining on me!

YOUR BEST BOY  
Jay

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There is little doubt we all have file cabinets full of memories. I ask that you open each and every drawer and play every one over and over and over, again. I suspect when you do, even more will be revealed. I also believe that when you do that, the strings of love that connected you to her will reknit the hole left in your heart because her physical presence is no longer here. I think that beautiful pain is how we heal.

In 1993, when several local gay men were off to march on Washington, an answering machine message informed us, that our Mom on Marlborough regrettably couldn't join. From that point forward, my Marlborough Mom would join the likes of a loving woman named Marge who adopted me and two others and showed us and the entire community of my youth more love than you could ever imagine and unfortunately, she was taken from me as I was changing planes in Minneapolis in 2004. Then, in 2019 the courts would bring NJ into my life as my birth mother petitioned to find me. Three moms, how fuckin' lucky am I? I had three moms.

Later that year, Zachary Ball penned an article that landed me on the cover of the Free Press' Sunday Edition of the Homes and Real Estate Section. In a cramped room on Fort Street, she was burnishing the finished front page onto the glass of a special fax machine that sent it to the plant for production. A large sized folder covered the suspicious removal of the poster-sized art that still adorns the walls of my home.

Webster tells us that a Bohemian is “a writer or an artist living an unconventional lifestyle, often in the company of like-minded people usually in a colony with others.”

***An artist living an unconventional lifestyle,  
often in the company of like-minded people  
usually in a colony with others.***

How could be surprised that she knew exactly who she was and that she was the very definition of that word?

So, to our Frog, our Friend and to My Marlborough and Marine City Mom – Thank you for shining your beautiful and loving, Bohemian countenance in our colony. No matter the name we used, you made us better. You made us stronger. You caused us to challenge convention. You loved us.

We were all lucky and forever changed by you and we will forever miss you.