

**Mary Alyce Person: A Tribute  
Memorial Service  
Berkeley City Club  
April 16, 2016  
Pat Justice**

It is an honor to be with you today to pay tribute to Mary Alyce, who has a very special place in my heart as she did in my husband's and son's.

You know, it is a blessing when an exceptional colleague also becomes a treasured friend. In Mary Alyce's case that is what happened to virtually everyone with whom she worked. We appreciated her wisdom and wit, her kind heart, and her way with words. She had both substance and style.

There are many former colleagues and friends of Mary Alyce back in Illinois and Iowa who wish they could be here today. Let me share some of their thoughts with you.

Beverly Friese, a development colleague wrote:

I was involved in hiring Mary Alyce for her first development position and it was apparent that her past experiences and maturity put her head and shoulders above many of our colleagues. I remember a cross country ski trip to Michigan when we decided that wine with lunch and then some shopping was a better way to spend our time rather than side stepping and experiencing kick turns.

Vicki Hensler Meggenson, another development colleague shared these thoughts:

When I read her obituary, I was struck by how much she accomplished everywhere she lived. She fits the saying, "Bloom where you are planted" and she certainly had lots of vivid and inspiring blooms. Although Alzheimer's pruned a few blooms, her bouquet was still amazing ...and I also think there is a hole in the universal without her here.

Lyn Jones preceded Mary Alyce as Assistant Dean for Development. Lyn describes her as:

Intelligent, cynical, funny, competitive, thoughtful, generous, political, spontaneous, compassionate, conscientious, impatient, creative, purposeful, collaborative, honest, adamant, gracious - all in all truly one of the most unique friends I have ever had. And while the list of adjectives may look contradictory at first glance, those combined characteristics truly define the Mary Alyce Pearson we celebrate and cherish.

As I write these words I am smiling and crying. How incredibly fortunate it is to have been part of this woman's spectacular life.

Joan Tousey also served as Associate Dean in the College of Education. Joan wrote:

Shortly after I started at the University, I had the good fortune of having Mary Alyce identified as my official mentor. So when I think of her, in addition to being a friend and colleague, she has been an inspiration in her role as a consummate fundraising professional, as well as that of wife, mother, and more recently, grandmother. Mary Alyce's warm smile and hearty laugh will always be with me.

Sara Kelley worked with Mary Alyce in the College of Education. Sara wrote:

I will always remember my first day working for Mary Alyce back in January of 1995. As part of my orientation, she shared David Letterman's Top Ten List which she received each morning by email. I knew immediately that I had landed in the right place. Although the Pearsons moved to Michigan State later that year, Mary Alyce taught me so much in such a short time. She was not only a colleague but a good friend. I will forever be grateful that our lives crossed paths.

Lynette Marshall a long time U of I colleague sent these remembrances:

Like others, I have many wonderful memories of Mary Alyce. She loved *Far Side* cartoons and would re-caption them to roast colleagues at their going away parties. At my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party she put on a pig-nose and tiara, to commemorate my days as national pork queen many decades earlier.

I remember celebrating her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, enjoying wonderful parties in the Pearson home, and talking about how much she cherished her role as wife and mother... and the closeness that she, David, Matthew and Susan shared. I will always treasure the times I spent with her over the years.

I hope the memories these friends have shared resonate with you as much as they did with me. I suspect each person in this room has his or her own cherished Mary Alyce memories and I'd like to share a few of my own.

One of my favorites is the day we decided to take the Miata out on a country road, and grab some lunch at a town near Champaign. The top was down, the sun was shining, the radio was blaring... and we were both singing at the top of our lungs.

Thank goodness no one but the cows and the corn were around as neither of us was known for having any talent when it came to singing...and it was fortunate that we both had hearing loss.

So we ended up getting lost. All we saw in any direction was farmland. Whenever we saw a house we decided not to ask for directions because we were sure we could figure out how to get back to campus. This was in the days before cell phones and GPS. Our little outing lasted 3 and a half hours...and we never had lunch.

I'm going to steal a page from David Letterman's book and share the top ten reasons I value my friendship with Mary Alyce.

Number 10. Her smile. Just say her name and you see her smile in your mind's eye and you begin smiling yourself. Her smile was a reflection of her inner core, her positive nature and her can do spirit. Seeing it always made my day.

Number 9. She not only heard...she listened. When you had a conversation with Mary Alyce she was with you all the way. You had her full and total attention.

Number 8. She was the consummate professional. She was the epitome of what it means to be a servant leader. She was collaborative. She looked for ways to grow in her profession. She was ethical and oozed integrity. She always went the extra mile.

Number 7. She was generosity personified. One thing I have always admired about David and Mary Alyce is the many ways they share their treasures with community organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions, the arts... and on and on. Mary Alyce's generosity also was evident in the way that she shared her time and talents with others. No matter how busy Mary Alyce was, she always had time to talk with a colleague about a challenge or to lend a hand to a project.

Number 6. She had the courage of her convictions. Can't you just see Mary Alyce with her eyes open, arms slicing through the air and feet barely on the ground talking about something that was passionate to her? She not only verbalized her concerns for the homeless and abused...she shared herself in various ways to help alleviate the suffering of others.

Number 5. She was the essence of humility. With all that she accomplished in her personal and professional life and for all that she did for others...she remained humble. She didn't beat her drum. She didn't seek recognition. She went about doing good in a quiet, stealth-like manner.

Number 4. Her funny bone. You know, she had this knack for good natured teasing. And she wouldn't let me get away with anything that smacked of unnecessary bureaucracy, especially when it came to writing reports. I can hear her say: "Yeah Justice, are you really going to read it?"

Number 3. Her keen mind. Between a premise and a conclusion, Mary Alyce studied issues and analyzed them from various perspectives before offering her insights. Our conversations were always lively and made me appreciate the breadth and depth of her knowledge.

Number 2. Her extraordinary communication skills. All I have to say is two words: Holiday letter. And she always had the right words at the right time.

And number 1. Her completeness. What you saw was what you got. There was no pretense. She mastered the art of juggling roles of wife, mother, professional, friend, and volunteer. She sought out opportunities to keep her mind, body and spirit active. She knew that she was a citizen of the world and worked to make other's lives better. She was gracious. She was genuine. She was awesome.

While I have talked about Mary Alyce as a valued colleague and a dear friend, our relationship also had another dimension - we shared a deep bond in our faith life. One day back in 1996 Mary Alyce and I were having one of our typical gabfests when she said that she wanted to tell me something important...and then proceeded to say that she had decided to become a Catholic. Knowing her I knew that this was not a decision she came to lightly but that she had studied and given serious thought to what it would mean to embrace the Catholic faith. I was fortunate to be with her when she was baptized, confirmed and received her first communion at the Easter Vigil in 1997.

In 2001 she wrote an extremely thoughtful article for the National Catholic Reporter that talked about the role of women in the church. It was an intellectual discourse that was full of hope, grounded in her deep seated belief that God created us all equal.

How do you sum up all the parts that were Mary Alyce? This woman who was daughter, sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, grandmother, friend, colleague, volunteer, champion of those in need, advocate for those without a voice. St. Francis composed a prayer that I feel perfectly sums up Mary Alyce and describes her philosophy of life and how she lived each day.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is error, truth;

Where there is discourse, union

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

God bless you Mary Alyce.