

## **Class Member Tributes to Arlene Robertson**

### **Julie Barnes**

My memories of Arlene are rather fuzzy, as most of mine are of my earlier years, but I do remember her as always being the one in charge of whatever we did. I remember going to movies, hiking in all the neighborhood gullies, and of being in the Animal Club.

My best memory is of her teaching me to play pool in her basement. I did pretty well. We played often, but I never beat her. I know my grandchildren will think I am a really cool grandma because I know how to play pool and that is thanks to her.

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### **Kathy Blight Richards: Remembering Arlene**

Well, I was also one of the Mack School girls like Arlene and a member of the Animal Club, as was she. She was always drawing horses like Maryanne Hellman and Anne Latourette. We all loved animals and would meet at various homes - I remember going to Sallie Gingles' and to Pat Finkbeiner's. Arlene was quite a good drawer of all different types of animals. She always had a smile and was truly a nice person. She had a good sense of humor and was always ready for fun.

My memories of her have dimmed, but she was always the nicest person. After elementary school, we lost touch as do a lot of kidlets but when we met up, there were always fond memories of the "Mack School days".

These are the memories I have of Arlene, in her little plaid dresses and her curly hair (not tight curls, but wavy curls). So I see her smiling wherever she is and not under the burden of her disease which I am sure was difficult for her. My best to you, Miss Arlene.

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### **Pat Finkbeiner: Memories of Arlene Robertson Owens**

I have known Arlene since Kindergarten at Mack School. We became close when I moved onto her block in January of 1955. Arlene was the youngest of three and I was the oldest of three siblings. We were very close all through Mack.

She was my best friend for a very long time.

I remember Animal Club meetings with Sally Gingles, Sally Goetze, Linda Bailey, Lynn Ladd, Mary Harper and Kathy Blight. We were all animal lovers back then. We played dolls continually, had sleepovers almost every week.

I remember eating orange sherbet with butterscotch sauce and Spanish peanuts. Her brother was allergic to wheat and chocolate, so that was the dessert of choice.

Mr. Robertson had made large wooden horses for all three kids one year for Christmas and we spent many hours in her basement riding them. That was during our horse phase.

I remember the summer after 3rd grade, we got a free stuff for kids book. We sent out countless 4 cent postcards, and waited daily on my front porch for Mr. Briggs, our mailman to bring us our goodies. We waited on my porch because he delivered to my house before hers on his route. He called us the "Gold Dust Twins, Goldie and Dusty."

I remember going to her cottage at North Lake and to her tap dance recitals. And eating at Howard Johnson's after the recital.

I remember the time she wrecked Rick's motor scooter when she was riding it around the block. Boy, was he mad.

We spent many Saturday afternoons walking downtown to go to the movies. Good old Doris Day and Rock Hudson and many more.

We drifted apart slightly when she moved across town by the high school after we left Slauson. We kept in touch after High School. I spent several weekends at Western Michigan visiting her.

Arlene was the maid of honor at my wedding in August of 1970.

She was out of state for so long that we didn't see each other much at all. She came to visit us at our Linwood Street house only twice after that.

I will always have fond memories of a very special friend - Arlene Fern Robertson.

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### **Shaya Gardner-Hayum (Loretta Quicksey)**

I came to Mack elementary school as a third grader in the mid 1950's. I was black and from a different community of Ann Arbor. I frequently reminisce these days about those childhood experiences and the friends that I went through elementary, middle and high school with. About fifteen years ago, gathering with Ann Arbor Pioneer High Alumni, I re-encountered many of us who were together at Mack, Slauson, Forsyth, Tappan and Pioneer.

Though separated by life choices and distance...I was excited to learn that Arlene had established a comfortable life in Foley, AL and had a family. We enjoyed many days on Mack elementary school yards pretending to be horses, galloping around and eating grass (lol). "Those were the days". Arlene was fun with a sunny disposition and I never felt different around her. One of life's great disappointments has been not being able to reconnect, after all these years. Even as I missed talking to a dear childhood friend, she has remained in my heart and on my mind. My prayers go out to her son, Andrew, and family. I was devastated when Bonnie told me about Arlene's trial with Alzheimer in 2010.

I will cherish our life experience and her humanitarian character.

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### **Sallie Gingles Marsico and Sally Goetze Preston: In Honor of Arlene Robinson**

The years were 1952 to 1959. We weren't exactly the Little Rascals, but we were somethin' - us kids, back in the 50's. So many of us! Children of the war generation - the "baby boomers," as we were called.

Arlene and I and the others attended Mack School on the west side of town, which made us a little special, because Mack was more integrated than most of the elementary schools. The girls within our group melded early on and stayed loosely connected through much of high school. It was the two Sally's (Sallie Gingles and Sally Goetze), Kathy Blight, Ann Latourette, Bonnie Holzhauser, Lynn Ladd, Linda Bailey, Pat Finkbeiner, Mary Harper - and others I may have forgotten.

We played together. All the time. There were no computers, not many scheduled activities and lots of free time. T.V. wasn't part of our after-school life.

We skated in West Park until half frozen - without supervision, sledded on the park's slopes and walked its "Indian trails" along the upper ridge, half believing we could find the promised arrowheads. We built huts and hiding places in the large gully behind my house on Mark Hannah and could keep a constant game of softball going, deep into dusk on Arbana's one remaining vacant lot. Roving kids from an eight by four block area moved in and out of the games as their parents and bladders permitted.

This grid was our "safe zone," filled with smart, little starter-homes, separated by a one-car garage with a single, cement driveway. The driveway served as platform for frequent games of Simon Says or Mother-May-I. Round, plastic swimming pools were placed on the concrete during a summer's afternoon and filled with a garden hose. Chalk lines for Hop-Scotch were usually in evidence along the connecting sidewalks and kick-the-can went on mid-street, deep into the night - or until the final bedtime call.

The outer borders of our sidewalks were lined with maple trees of brilliant, fall color and the exotic-leafed Gingkos. Our first experience with death was the loss of the beautiful Elm trees to a disease of the same name. Our hearts mourned for them when our fathers explained the finality of the new void.

We tied heavy, metal roller-skates to our shoes, making sure to hang the key around our neck and, impatiently, awaited our turn in four-man jump-rope, while our bicycles lay on the ground nearby, ready for



baseball and that we had gotten in so much trouble together as adults - can't write it here, but Arlene knows what I'm talking about.

Finally, Pegasus came and wrapped his wings around you and here was this pretty young woman heading to a constellation to be a flicker star. I am sure you argued with him all the way - your style.

I can't believe you're gone but whenever I see a constellation of Pegasus I know you are arguing with someone.

I love you, friend, and you will never leave my soul.

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### **Bonnie Holzhauer Bean**

Fellow classmate, mother and friend Arlene Robertson passed away February 3, 2012 in Gainesville, Florida. Some may remember Arlene from her childhood neighborhood, others from Mack Elementary School or Slauson Jr. High. The Editors of the *Omega* and others will have high school memories.

Arlene lived in Ann Arbor until the mid 1970's, when she moved to Fort Myers, Florida to be near her retired parents. While in Fort Myers, Arlene worked for an accounting firm. In 1980, she married Lee Owens and they moved to Lee's hometown in northeastern Ohio. It was there that her son, Andrew, was born. Several years later, they moved to Gainesville, Florida. While in Gainesville, Arlene volunteered for The Boy Scouts of America. During that time, Andrew earned his Eagle Scout Award.

One of Arlene's passions was the written word and she was seldom without a book in hand. She was a strong-willed woman, not afraid to voice an opinion, no matter what others' reactions would be. The irony and sadness of Arlene's life is that Alzheimer's was her thief.

For those who would like to offer a remembrance of her to her son Andrew, please send it to: Bonnie Holzhauer Bean @3417 NW 4th Street, Gainesville FL 32609 or [beanbhh@yahoo.com](mailto:beanbhh@yahoo.com).

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### **Mike Robinson**

Dear Arlene,

You and many others may think it strange that I'm writing you a letter to your memorial service. I find it a statement of my beliefs, which by now you have realized to be true. I believe that once a person's body completely stops working that the real person continues to exist, simply in a different form. Rather than human form, they continue on in spirit form. So by knowing this to be true, I know that though you probably did not actually receive this letter, you certainly can hear it being read. As you see this letter and all the other messages your friends have prepared and presented this day, I want you to look around the room and realize just how many different lives you have touched in your time here. In fact, while you are looking around this gathering I would like to invite everyone present today to do the same. Look around the room and really experience what one life has accomplished. There are many titles applied during a lifetime to each of us. In your case, Arlene, we can certainly recreate that list starting with daughter, adding classmate, student and graduate. From there we might move to co-worker, mom and after a continued list of other titles we complete the list with friend. Friend seems a fitting way to complete this list because in many cases "friend" was an integral part in most of the other titles.

Friendships are given life in many different ways. There are those friendships that begin in early childhood as a result of living on the same block or sometimes even in the same house. Then there are those friendships which begin when one enters school. That is where our friendship began. It was a long time ago, in fact so long ago it was a different century. Our paths began to cross way back in 1959 when we both arrived at Slauson Junior High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We were both starting the seventh grade. Now, keep in mind that computers were just being introduced to school systems and were very limited in function. Maybe very limited is not totally fair in describing the computers but more accurate in describing the operators of the time. Anyway, much of class organization was done by the teachers using paper and pencil and a little something called the alphabet. That's what brought you and me together, the alphabet. Whenever we ended up in the same class or the same line you were always in front of me. Since your last name was R-o-b-e-r-t-s-o-n and mine R-o-b-i-n-s-o-n, we were always facing new experiences together. From classroom to lunchroom to graduation, you were right in front of me all the way. Why, even in the high school yearbook your picture was right ahead of mine. I remember trying to convince you that the only reason you were

always in front of me was because my mother always taught me to allow ladies to go first. Of course this was far from acceptable to you. So I would often be reminded that you were a mighty R-o-b-e... while I was a lowly R-o-b-i and that was the reason you were in the front. I always wondered whatever happened to that old rule we learned in our early years of spelling. You know the one that goes I before E, except after C, blah, blah, blah..There are always some things that never change,

Looking back, I'm happy to have had you to share those early years of uncertainty. Little did either of us realize at that time that we were both silently going through those difficult teenage years. We all seem to go through those times thinking we are the only one feeling the things we are feeling. No one else could possibly feel as insecure or be as friendless as we were feeling. Then decades go by and the truth is often shared. Two people sit down and recount those early times and listen to each other's sad story of those difficult years with shock and surprise all over their faces. Oftentimes one friend will say to the other "I always thought you were popular" only to hear a burst of laughter and a response along the lines of "are you kidding me?"

There are many memories I have of you, my friend. Though I may not know if you have any of me, I am glad to have my memories. Thank you so much for being nice to me and maybe without even knowing it, helping me through a time in life that is normally difficult for all, but excessively difficult for me. You touched so many more lives than you realize in ways you never thought about. With time being a most precious gift, I want to thank you from the very depths of my soul for sharing some of yours, with me.

Your friend, Mike