

Marcia Durfor Remembrance

03 August 2011

I was fortunate to be re-hired for the second year as the dance drummer for the Christopher Ryder House in Chatham, MA in 1976, the Bi-Centennial year of the USA. I wanted to live in town, so I looked for a room to rent. After a quick glance at the paper, I called Marcia Durfor.

The way she described our first meeting was like 2 people walking in a circle looking each other over and thinking "Who the hell are you?!" Before long we were laughing and she rented me a room on Heritage Lane. We called it the "Abbey" because "Mother Superior" wasn't allowing any hanky-panky at #44!

It turned out that her father, Brigadier General Duffie, was running Fort Eustis in Virginia in the early 1950's where my father was stationed in the Army. We found this out when my dad visited the Abbey and saw the general's photo.

I was only 20 and appreciated being in her busy home, and I think she liked having me around as I was generally helpful, musical, obeyed her rules, liked the outdoor shower, and offered her an understanding

ear as her dear husband Don had been taken from her not too long before. She would let me play her piano and organ with tunes like "Blue Bayou", "Something Stupid", and "I Don't Know Why I Love You Like I Do". Her favorite was "Body and Soul".

She came to the Ryder House as my guest once in a while, and I went with her to the VFW to hear her play the different service hymns as the veterans came marching into the room. Sometimes we'd go to the Sou'wester or some other place on rainy days to see the colorful locals, like "Rip the Redneck".

The summer was filled with art, music, the beach, and sounds like Mr. Murphy's distinctive peacocks next door. One had to be careful not to break the driving rules or risk getting a ticket from Officer Brooks. Sometimes we would just take a ride around The Loop or hit the lighthouse and enjoy the spectacular Chatham scenery. It was a splendid summer, and I was sad when I had to go back to college up in Waltham.

Marcia and I remained friends all these years. She kept pictures of me and other tenants in her phone cubby, especially the ones with ridiculous costumes. We both enjoyed the bizarre. Frequently I would receive a hand-painted letter or photos of life around town. Each summer I made it a point to meet Marcia for coffee at the local bakery, usually by surprise, and each year we would recall which anniversary it was since that special summer. This went on for decades. Many times she would take me to her studio and send me home with a painted shell or drift wood.

I watched Marcia while she fought off various ailments, but she would not let them stop her from getting around and doing what she loved, even when "the eyesight" wasn't so good. She would give her ailments definite articles like "the cancer", "the heart", etc. She loved walking her beloved beach in the morning and seeing who was around at the bakery.

Time finally caught up with Marcia, but I have to say that she and I shared a bond of friendship that goes beyond time, and I will always be grateful that this lady took me in and showed me why Cape Cod is such a wonderful place.

I often dreamed about having a home on Cape Cod with an outdoor shower. Finally in 1995 my family bought a condo in Yarmouth and yes, it already had the outdoor shower waiting for me.

Thanks Marcia, farewell. Love, Brad Clemens