

BIOGRAPHY OF MARY ELIZABETH ROBERTS GABBITAS

Mary was born June 24, 1971 in Quincy, California. She was the youngest of eight children. When I brought her home from the hospital, her brothers and sisters said that she looked like a little frog. She was beautiful and her father and I were very happy to have her.

We were poor and it was a struggle to keep all the children fed and clothed. Mary got all the hand-me-downs from the other children. Mostly she wore her brother Matthew's shirts and pants. One day her sister, Camille, said,

"I am sick of seeing that beautiful little girl dressed like a boy. I am going to make her some little dresses."

And she did. She took her own hard-earned money went to town and bought some material. She took Mary with her so she could pick out the material. Then she came home and spent three days sewing some cute little dresses for Mary. I was expecting another baby, and it was a great help to me to have Camille, take over the younger children.

I used to take Mary and Matthew for a walk every Sunday afternoon up in the mountains behind our house and read Bible stories to them. They loved this and looked forward to our walks together. Mary was not a hard child to raise. She had her sister Rebecca as a role model and they were very close. Mary wanted to be like Rebecca and Rebecca was an obedient child and taught her sister good moral values.

When Mary was only six years old, we had a terrible tragedy in our family. Our house caught on fire and we lost our new little baby girl, Flora, in that fire. Mary talked about her baby sister all the time and when she was in school, she would draw pictures of our family with her baby sister up in the clouds.

We were desperate. We did not have insurance. We lost everything. I was an emotional wreck and could not give any emotional support to my suffering children. A year later, I was still crying every day. This had a profound emotional effect on Mary. I don't think she has ever fully recovered from.

The whole town got together and rebuilt our home. We got a government grant to help. Everyone in the Ward came and helped to rebuild. The Relief Society President came over and told me she felt inspired that I should go back to college. This I did, and it was the best thing. I sent Mary to live with her sister Rebecca for a year so I could go to school.

Mary did well in school. She tried very hard to keep up with her brother, Matthew. Both of them were avid conversationalists and kept everyone in stitches with their testimonies on Fast day. There were no secrets in the Roberts household.

We only had one car. Dad needed that to go to work. Crawford worked very hard to support his family as a clerk for the Union Pacific Railroad. He was very diligent in his church work. He never missed a home teaching assignment in his whole life except once when he was in the hospital. Because we were without a car, we all rode bikes everywhere. When we would go out to Oakland Camp during the

summer to swim in the river, we all went on bikes. I put Mary on the rear fender whenever we took her. Once she got her heel caught in the spokes of the back wheel. It was a terrible injury, and she had to keep it wrapped up for a long time.

Mary had plenty of friends. One of her best friends was Cindy. When Mary and Cindy were in High School they were part of a "Six Pac" that played on the Volleyball team for Quincy High School. Mary broke the record for track when she was only in the ninth grade. Her name is still on the wall at Quincy High School.

Mary liked everything in order. Even as a little girl, she was specific about a place for everything and everything in its place. She had inherited this particular gene from her Grandmother Roberts. She certainly did not get it from me or her Dad.

She left for College when she was only seventeen. It was just the day after she graduated from high school. She went with the "Six Pac" and they all got a room in the college dorm together. I remember driving her to Reno with her little nephew Kenny. He was just a little boy. He said,

"Is Aunt Mary like the three little pigs who left home so they could earn their own living?"

I started to cry. It was very hard for me to lose my youngest daughter. I had lost Flora, and now Mary.

She did well at college. She was the only one of the "Six Pac" who kept her virtue during those college days. She transferred to Brigham Young University and did very well there. She met a young man who was very interested in her. Somehow she felt inspired that she should go on a mission for the church. It was the best thing. She went to Argentina on that mission. She made a great number of converts and the Mission President said that he wished he could make her one of his assistants. He wanted her to extend her mission so she could teach the new elders some of her strategies. If she had been an elder, she would have most certainly been his assistant. When she came home and went to college, the mission president was always sending young elders to meet her because he thought she was such a good catch.

The young man who was interested in her was not acquainted with our family. When she came home from her mission, he was right there to meet her. She invited him to stay the week end with our family. He came. So did all her brothers and sisters. David came drunk. Tessie came with her new little illegitimate baby. Dad was on heavy medication because of his multiple health problems, and was stoned most of the time. The house was a wreck, and I was trying to keep one of our foster children, Travis Churchill in line. We were trying to feed and accommodate about 15 people

The next week Mary was going to visit him in San Francisco. He was enrolled at a very prestigious college there, Stanford. He told her the marriage plans were off. He came from a more affluent family. Both mother and father were college professors. "He did not have a good feeling."

What a blessing!!

Then she met Jeff Gabbitas, and he was the best thing that ever happened to her. He accepted our whole family just fine and was not bothered by any of us. He loved us all and we all loved him and knew that Mary was inspired to go on that mission before she made any commitments to the other boy. She met Jeff while teaching at the Missionary Training Center while they were both teaching Spanish to the new missionaries.

When Jeff and Mary were courting, I decided to make a quilt for them as a wedding present. I asked all of the relatives to complete a square so I could sew it into the quilt. Jeff's mother sent a square with his genealogy all embroidered on it. I couldn't believe it. It was the same as Mary's father on the Savage line. Mary and Jeff were 5th cousins!! No wonder he was so accepting of our rag-tag family.

I have been to help with Mary's confinement after the birth of all her and Jeff's children. Her children certainly have different personalities than mine did. Their children are high achievers and strong willed. The way Mary and Jeff have managed them has been an inspiration to me. I would have killed them!!

Once when I was there we all came home from church. Mary and Jeff felt that it was not appropriate for Mary to prepare a big dinner on Sunday, because it was a day of rest, so they often had top rammen. When it came time for an evening meal, Jake said,

"What are we having for supper?"

"We are having left over top rammen."

"We had that for lunch!"

"This is the Sabbath Day. We are not cooking anything else."

"I HATE THIS FAMILY! I AM NOT GOING TO EAT TOP RAMMEN AGAIN. I AM RUNNING AWAY!!!

Jake went into his room and pulled out a big suitcase and opened his drawers and put in all his clothes and packed them in the suitcase. He could not lift the suitcase so he had to drag it out the door. All the time he was in tears bawling his head off.

"Where are you going son?"

"I AM GOING TO LIVE WITH THE NEIGHBORS!!!"

Jeff got on the phone and told the neighbors that Jake was going to come and live with them, and would they please accept him and tell him in a while that "they were going to have dinner with top rammen!!!"

They agreed and the next thing we saw was Jake sitting on the porch crying his eyes out.

Jeff went out and sat by him.

"What is the matter, son?"

"I am just going to live out here alone forever! "

"Well I don't think you will like it when the Habanyeras come out of the mountains at night"

"What are Habanyeras??"

"Oh they are like wolves. They like to eat little children who have run away from home."

Jake finally came back in the house dragging his suitcase. He did not unpack it for three days.

I am 80 years old and do not have many years left on this earth. I wanted to write this Biography so that Jeff and Mary's children would be able to pass this information on to their children. It is valuable.

Grandma, Flora Tessie Butts Roberts

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