

Joan Gibbons Wilson
Remembrance by Carol Parker Stein, niece
January 13, 2006

I think of Shirley Temple movies when I think of my Aunt Joan. Brave little girls with a dimple who while smiling and singing, face hard times and must be good little soldiers.

Soldiering on is something children of the Depression era learned to do well. It's the sort of thing we often do with feelings that are overwhelming, at times like this around a loved one's death. It helps us cope with life and go on despite our broken hearts. Soldiering on is what my Aunt Jo did after her sister, my Mom, died last year. It's how she got through the hard parts of life and it kept her going through all her pain in the last years.

She was my Mom's best friend through their lives from Chatham, New Jersey, to Arlington, Virginia, and Ft Myers, Florida. They were alike and different as many sisters are. They both loved animals and sailing, the sun on the water, wind in their hair – music and dancing and singing. Jo was more outspoken, my Mom – more shy, but so similar inside. They came from the same roots, roots that helped them be strong through their lives, roots that they passed on to us their children and grandchildren. Whether we knew them well or only peripherally, we carry some of that strength within us, that Gibbons steeliness, that sense of humor, that love of nature.

I am so grateful to my Aunt Jo for showing me another face of motherhood, another way to parent, for helping me understand my own mother. I learned about the power of sisters, family and love that overcome obstacles, love that is stubborn and strong.

She inspired me to walk as a form of meditation and exercise. I'm going to always remember walking with her along the canal tow path and being amazed at how fast she could walk! So now she and my Mom are walking/flying/dancing together again with no limitations - greeting old friends and dogs with love and smiles.

I miss my Mom and Joan; it doesn't seem real that they are not with us. It is a huge loss. The knowledge that they are together and we all get to be together, with no separation from each other or God, buoys me in these sad days.

Thank you God for all these family and friends.