

# *Cindy Ramos' Eulogy*

## *What is a Eulogy?*

I looked online for help in writing one for my mother, and it said to give information about the person, their background, where they came from, life accomplishments, who they are. But it said most importantly, the information should come from the heart...so this should come easy.

Cynthia Ann Harbert made her opening debut on August 22, 1950. To start she had the blessing of being loved and shared by 3 families, and even though she spent most of her physical time with one, the bond, the connection, and the love only grew with the others.

'She was such a precocious child', my Gramma used to say. 'She could do anything she put her mind to' and that was the absolute truth. At the age of 2, she got up and played a song on the piano. She was asked, 'where'd u learn that?' and she boastfully replied, 'I heard it on the radio!' She played by ear. My grandparents of course, put her in piano lessons but that didn't last long because she had to do it her way. She did a recital at the age of 5, and she also had a pretty nice voice to boot. She loved to sing...and it showed. She would jam to the oldies with such a beautiful tone and the animation in her made it so much fun to watch.

She grew up literally in the church. Long before the big 3 cross neighborhood church existed, it was held in someone's garage in Oakland. She, along with her parents, were regulars and followed along to the current location in Castro Valley. She attended church, sunday school, bible studies, youth groups, summer camps; and her faith in God was established at a young age.

She was outgoing and friendly from the very beginning. I have heard a few stories about how in her early teens she would approach perfect strangers, and say..'you wanna come over my house and spend the night'? Not an easy task for a teen. And once a friend, always a friend; because that is just how Mom was. Years may pass, but my mom would always reconnect and find those friends.

Mom was born and raised in Oakland and graduated Oakland High School in 1968. This in itself was quite an accomplishment as she became pregnant in her senior year, and gave birth to her first son Daniel in December 1967. Back in those days an unwed pregnant teen was quite taboo, but my mom was always one to march to the beat of her own drum, despite what others might say, and hold her head high in the process. Danny became her life as being a mother just came natural to her. Soon thereafter, my mother met my father who later on she would so proudly refer to as her 'favorite ex husband'...with whom I would have to say came her biggest accomplishment...ME and Kim. Notice how I came first.

And let me just say, that is just a joke because through all of this, I have learned a lot about my mother. One of the biggest things being how much my mother loved all of us children and how much pride she had in each one of us. That love was, is, and always will be abundant and equal..

Moving on, mom married again and blessed us with 3 more brothers. Freddie, who Mom always said was born to irritate the world, Jason, affectionately known to Mom known as Michael and the sweetheart of the bunch, and Shawn who we all know is absolutely Mom's Baby-spoiled rotten!

As a family we have seen our share of tough times. Mom found herself in her 30's being a single mother of 6 kids, but she always stepped up to the plate and made things happen. She was a true survivor.

She worked for years in collections, with a knack for skip tracing and she enjoyed it. She could find anyone...if she wanted you, there was no hiding! Later in life, this became a great asset to her in her pursuit to prove her birthright with a direct bloodline to the Eastern Band Cherokee Tanasi Tribe. Mom was so proud of this connection. She felt her belonging there and spent countless hours pecking away at the keyboard on her computer to do the research and fill in the gaps of our genealogy, -tracing us back to John Ross, leader of the Cherokee of eastern Tennessee back when the Cherokees were removed through the trail of tears. It is known that our Tanasi Tribe of about 300 at the time, were among those that refused to leave and remained in hiding in the mountains of Tennessee. Survivorship and the love of family became the utmost importance and is a quality that cannot be explained in words, but is passed on in our bloodline, as we know so well through our mother.

Mom was so extremely proud of her heritage. Not only did it fill in the gaps of a deep and rich family tree, but as Mom learned more of the Cherokee traits, she felt her belonging. She connected with her cousin Alice who currently is the Commissioner of the Tennessee Council of Indian Affairs, who helped give mom so much of the information she had been looking for, but already knew.

**Cherokee...** is not just a name of a bloodline. It goes so much deeper than that. Our people are a spiritual being. Our Tanasi Tribe trace back to what was called the Paint Clan, a people known for spirituality, medicine man type work, with the ability to have visions, clairvoyance, and to channel into different times.

Believe what you want, but I know this to be true as that same blood flows through my veins.

One of the comments my mother made to Alice in a conversation, was "I always KNEW I was Indian Alice, I always knew it". AND she did know it, she felt it. As it was said to her and now said to me, every time she looked into the mirror, she looked into the eyes of her Cherokee father, and his fathers, just as I will look into the mirror and stare into the eyes of my mother. Cherokee is a being, and my mother embraced it as do I and every child of my mother.

Currently, our Tanasi Clan which has grown to over 2000, descendants of those that chose to remain in their native land in the hills of Tennessee, are in a battle that has been going on for years to have recognition from the State of Tennessee. It became my mother's mission to fight in this battle for the rights of her people, which includes the recognition for herself, her children, and her grandchildren.

It is with great honor, that us 6 children vow to continue the fight in her behalf, that even in her departure from this life, she WILL receive the recognition she has so diligently fought for.

Mom will be proud.

My mom instilled in us much more than I ever knew. I can see the picture so clearly now, and understand who she was and what she was about. She was deep, she had a heart of gold, she was non-judgmental, and she had the spirit of fire that will remain with us forevermore.

Additionally, what has happened to our mother is a tragedy beyond what any words can describe. I still want to pick up the phone and tell her what is happening, so I know the gravity of this nightmare hasn't fully hit us yet. But we have so much love amongst each other, and have banded together like never before. Our journeys in this life may continue without her physical presence, but Mama, rest assured that you did so well by us. We know what your love is, and we can go on because of it. We will share that love with each other, our children, and our extended families as you would want. We will fight for all that is right in your honor, living everyday to make you proud, and seeing to it that your legacy will live on forever.

Those who robbed you of life, those that took you from your children, those that stole you from the world that you graced so well, will meet their maker one day. And though it will not bring you back, there is some solace in 2 things

1 –as justice will see it, no other family will suffer the lifetime of unimaginable grief that we are forced to live each day at their hands of pure evil

2 – Knowing that their punishment will be far greater than any of us can ever imagine and that punishment will last them an eternity.

As I close this up, I would like to share with you all a story, leading into a poem, a story that proves to me and my family how powerful my mother is, and how her spirit is hard at work, comforting us as a mother would and giving us one of many pieces that we know are her doing...because my mom is still telling us what to do and orchestrating her own funeral.

I have a few of my mother's things that I keep in my purse, just in case. One of them is her address book. When I first got it, I thumbed through it..looking for phone numbers, glancing at business cards, reading anything that stood out. In particular, hand written notes. I did come across a piece of notebook paper and thought that might be important, so I opened it up found a poem in her writing entitled "Who am I". It portrayed the message of the pride in being a Native American. Over the next few days, I had thumbed through the same address book several more times.

Switching gears a little...everyday has been a struggle for all of us. On August 10, 2009, four days after her death, I woke that morning like every other morning and the first thing I did was cry. I was in a haze as I tried to clean my hotel room. At some point, I rumbled thru my purse on the bed, and set it on the floor. I stepped away for a moment and came back to make the bed. As I pulled the

sheets back, this piece of notebook paper literally flew open in front of me. And right there in my Moms red handwriting was a poem that spoke the words we all needed to hear.

*Written and Read by Cindy's eldest daughter, Christina Barnes*