



Beverly J. Bradford

Life Story

Some people go through life in constant complaint about their troubles, never counting their many blessings. Beverly Bradford certainly wasn't one of them. She was a woman faced with so many challenges in her life, yet courageously fought her adversity, and always appreciated the gifts she was given.

Beverly's story began on a cold winter day in 1940, in the little town of Connersville, Indiana. Those were tumultuous times around the globe, as the darkening skies of World War II thundered in the distance, and America readied for its eventual entry into battle. On February 15, 1940, Hershel and Katie Runner celebrated the birth of a baby girl, a daughter they named Beverly Jane.

The Runners were unable to provide for their daughter, and put Beverly up for adoption, just as they had done for three of Beverly's siblings. When Beverly was five years old, she was adopted by a wonderful couple named Frank and Olive (Washburn) Balance, a couple from Paw Paw, Michigan who had no children of their own. For the first time in her life, little Beverly had a loving, nurturing home, with the special attention she would need so greatly.

Beverly was born with several health problems, which would affect her throughout her life. One of her legs was six inches shorter than the other, and she was also born with a degenerative bone disease, causing her great pain and discomfort. Over her lifetime she underwent more than 26 major surgeries, to her legs, hips, arm joints and knees, and often traveled to the University of Michigan Hospital, and the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Her doctors tried every treatment, all to no avail.

Despite her physical limitations, Beverly was always determined to lead a normal life, especially when she was a young girl. She attended Paw Paw High School, where she was a cheerleader, and amazingly, played on the tennis team, as well.

She also fell in love with a handsome young man named Wade Bradford, her childhood sweetheart. Anxious to be with Wade, who was leaving for the service, Beverly left school after the 10th grade and the two eloped, marrying on December 22, 1956, when she was just 16.

The newlyweds shipped out overseas together, living in Germany where Wade was stationed. When he was finally discharged, the couple moved back to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Beverly possessed a powerful work ethic, yet her physical limitations prevented her from holding a job very long. She worked for Alingsworth, Mead Paper and finally as a waitress, until her disability forced her to stop working altogether when she was 30.

Her marriage to Wade also didn't last, and the couple was married five years before they divorced. Beverly was

blessed with two wonderful children, sons Randy born in 1961, and Richard, born in 1962. They brought Beverly so much joy over the years.

Beverly and the children moved back home with her parents, at 1030 East Michigan Ave in Paw Paw, where she spent her youth. After she quit working, she devoted her attention to the family she loved so dearly, with three generations under one roof.

Beverly was a wonderful daughter, and an amazing mother, as well. She ran a tight ship, but she was extremely caring, and always fair and supportive. She wanted to make sure her sons graduated from high school, because she never did. She was also their Den mother in the Cub Scouts, and was there when they needed her.

Beverly was there when anyone needed her. She cared for her parents after she returned home, especially her mother Olive, after her father died in 1975. In Olive's later years, Beverly cooked, cleaned and cared for her mother, whom she was so close to. Beverly was devastated following her mother's death in 1991. Beverly had also cared for her aunt Lida and Lida's husband Bee Earl. She also adored her grandchildren, and spending time with them always brightened her days.

Beverly was so grateful for the people in her life, and was so close to her family and many friends. She was especially close to Louise Lousier, a lifelong friend that her kids called Aunt Louise, as well as Sandy Hahn, Talynn Klett, Sandy Oakleaf, Ellen McGuire, Jeanie Mays and Betty Wells. One friend nicknamed her "Beaver," and it stuck for many years. She considered herself the "Mayor of Paw Paw" because she knew so many people, many of whom were friends. Another special friend was Robert and together with other friends they often traveled to Drummond Island one of Beverly's favorite places.

Beverly also found companionship in her dogs, which she loved so much over the years. Her favorite was a cocker mix named Winnie Bear, and she loved her mother's dog Taffy Bear, too.

Beverly had many loves, though, the way people who appreciate life often do. She loved to read, especially mystery novels, and practically wore out her library card! She enjoyed a good comedy sitcom on TV, or a funny movie. She also loved to cook, and was famous for her delicious sweet & sour meatballs and potato salad. Thanksgiving at her parents' home was always her favorite holiday, a simple gathering filled with food and family.

Family and friendship meant everything to Beverly, helping her cope with her disability over the years. She was a courageous fighter, who never gave up hope for better days, and despite her doctors telling her she would be wheelchair-bound one day, she proudly proved them wrong. Through all her challenges, she remained an upbeat, selfless woman, as well as a funny woman with a tremendous sense of humor.

Sadly, Beverly died unexpectedly of a heart attack December 22, 2006, at the age of 66.

Beverly was a wonderful woman, a woman who faced so many hurdles in her life, so many challenges. She had many triumphs, as well, triumphs in spirit, and in the beloved family who meant the world to her. She will be greatly missed.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a sister, Carol Griffith. Members of her family include her two sons; Randy (Pamela) Bradford and Richard Bradford all of Paw Paw, three grand-children, Amber, Jonathon, and Travis, four brothers, William Runner of Lakeside, CA, Joseph Runner of Kalamazoo, Richard Forbes of Paw Paw and Michael Forbes of Kalamazoo, several nieces and nephews. Cremation has taken place. Learn

more about Beverly and view her Life Story Film on Saturday from 11:00 AM until the time of service at 12 Noon at the Life Story Funeral Home-Betzler & Thompson 60900 M-40 Paw Paw 657-3870. Private interment in Prospect Hill Cemetery. Following the service a time of food and fellowship will be shared at the Paw Paw Eagles. Please visit her personal web page at www.lifestorynet.com where you can read her Life Story, archive a memory, upload photos or make a contribution to the charity of your choice.