

This message was sent by Elaine Cullen, who attended the service:

## **Memorial Service for Barbara Hauptfuhrer**

2:00 p.m., Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 ~ Community Church sanctuary

### **Homily**

Rev. Dr. Casey G. Baggott

To stand and speak at this memorial for Barbara is no easy task. I credit her family members with grace and courage for their wonderful tributes at such a tender time. Of course, the difficulty as I see it, for those of us who speak of Barbara's life, does not lie in there being nothing to be said – but in there being so much. And so, no mere string of words we contrive can ever capture the rich life we all remember.

But Barbara was a great lover of music, we'll hear and sing some of her favorite pieces today ... and it has occurred to me, in light of her life-long love of music, that perhaps if we select three words – and let them ring out – like suggestive musical phrases, which can be embellished with variations and verses, we might be able to touch meaningfully and suggestively upon Barbara's legacy to us all.

So let me try ... with the first of those three suggestive words being **Elegance.** ..

George passed on to me an email he received from the Wellesley's Friends Organization – presumably sent out to many, many friends and graduates of Wellesley – to alert them to Barbara's death, the passing of one of their finest. One young Wellesley graduate was quoted in this communication, recounting her first meeting with Barbara.

Listen to her description: “Barbara Barnes Hauptfuhrer was my first real experience with the ‘old girls’ royalty of Wellesley lore. Barbara was a strikingly beautiful woman. She exuded confidence and success...she was classically Wellesley --- all common sense and regal-ness and put-together sensibility.” ... And the young woman writing this concludes by observing: “She intimidated the heck out of me.”

Yes, that could happen. There was much to find intimidating in Barbara's life: her extraordinary athletic talents, for one ... in crew, basketball, tennis, golf. She actually won the Roaring Gap women's golf championship twenty-one times!

And her successes did not end on the playing fields. She was an accomplished musician – playing piano and harp, and singing enthusiastically throughout her life.

And she was a remarkable business leader, being one of the first women directors of major US corporations – plural – she sat on several

boards. And she served in the non-profit sector, as well, as a board member or trustee for Wellesley College, the Ladies Professional Golf Association, and as President of the Junior League of Philadelphia, and on the list goes.

Indeed, this could be intimidating. *She* could have been intimidating. But she wasn't. Why not? Maybe it was that elegance, after all, capable of putting us all at ease.

There was never anything pretentious or ostentatious about her. She wore and owned little jewelry of value – she had collected little art of significance. She collected memories, she said, instead of things – memories of time spent with her precious family members, memories of those fabled travels – she'd been to 68 countries, on 6 continents. These experiences and memories were her greatest treasures.

An early nineteenth century theologian, William Ellery Channing, describes his quest after the same sort of authenticity and earnestness – and I find it actually describes Barbara. Says Channing:

*To live content with small means – to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion – to be worthy, not respectable – to be wealthy, not rich – to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly – to listen to the stars and birds, babes and sages, with open heart – to bear all cheerfully – to do all bravely, await occasions, never hurry – in a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common – this is to be my symphony.*

What a wonderful choice of words for Barbara's life – symphonic! Yes. It was just that: harmonious and textured and elegant and grand.

In fact – the second word I would propose, as a word suggestive of her legacy to us, is **Grand**. By this word I am hoping to connote large-scale, big, important, serious. Barbara's life was not small or conventional. Neither were her thoughts and beliefs.

For example, she could not sanction a cramped and narrow depiction of God. Years ago, in another state, she and George looked for a new church home, when the congregation with which they worshipped did not seem to preach a gospel large enough to convey the wonder and loving goodness they knew of God. And we count ourselves fortunate that they have added that largeness of spirit, along with their insights, and kindness, and great faithfulness to our congregation here in Vero Beach in recent years.

And when I learned that a poem entitled "Imagine," had become a favorite for Barbara near the end of her life, I wasn't surprised at all. Because this is a poem that challenges us all to expansive, grand thinking,

about what lies ahead for her – for us. Here is the poem that Barbara had come to love:

*Imagine  
stepping onto a shore and finding it heaven  
Imagine  
taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand  
Imagine  
breathing new air and finding it celestial air  
Imagine  
feeling invigorated and finding it immortality  
Imagine  
passing from storm & tempest to an unknown calm  
Imagine  
waking and finding it home*

Imagine, indeed, the grandness of heaven, our ultimate home, as conceived by the mind and heart and compassion of God. Barbara could. And it was beautiful.

And that is the third and final word I will suggest for describing the legacy Barbara has left us. **Beauty**.

This word, beauty, has the greatest resonance of all for me, when I think of Barbara and her life. Wasn't it beautiful? If beauty is found in those things we enjoy and delight in beholding, then beauty has, of course, its outward and physical dimensions – and in these ways Barbara was beautiful – strikingly so, as it has been said. She had a smile that shone like a warm beacon, and we delighted in seeing it.

But Barbara's life also had a soft, burnished, inner beauty that delighted us – one polished and refined by time. This inner beauty was reflected in her deep and appreciative love of her husband, her children, and her grandchildren. She said repeatedly to me that she had been SO fortunate to have had such a splendid family. Her gratitude was beautiful to witness. And so was her devotion to you all.

Barbara and George had been married for 58 years. And she was not anxious to end the run. As her disease progressed, and threatened to separate her from George, she put forward challenges for herself to make it to her next birthday – and she made it to 80. And then she set Christmas as her goal – and she made it. And then she moved the goal to Easter. But she didn't make it quite that far.

She had taught her grandchildren that the beauty and strength of a marriage lies in its foundation – it must rest upon shared values and beliefs and commitments, as hers had.

The wonder of such a marriage is that its beauty does not dim with age, but is enhanced – it grows and strengthens and deepens, even as other outward aspects of life begin to fade.

Barbara and George always slept holding hands. When Barbara's breathing became so difficult, and oxygen tubes and breathing apparatus surrounded the bed, this did not alter the pattern. Of course they would sleep side by side, hand in hand. Barbara died at 4:30 in the morning, her hand held firmly, lovingly, in George's hand. The most beautiful ending imaginable.

This kind of powerful beauty is inextinguishable. The beauty of Barbara's life will remain with us. As poet Hadin Marshall puts it:

*The tide recedes but leaves behind  
bright seashells on the sand,  
The sun goes down, but gentle warmth  
still lingers on the land,  
The music stops, and yet it echoes on  
in sweet refrains ...  
For every joy that passes,  
something beautiful remains.*

Barbara's life, which we celebrate today, and will remember always, was elegant, grand, beautiful. And all this remains – though she is no longer here with us.

I said earlier that Barbara had not quite made it to her final goal – living to Easter. But of course, that's not quite right. And perhaps her timing was not off, after all. Maybe it was impeccable.

Fifty-eight years ago, her father walked her down the long aisle of the Duke Memorial Chapel, and put her hand into George's hand. And for all these years, she and George have clasped hands tightly. But this year, just before Easter, God took her by the hand, and led her past the long illness, to a new peace and joy.

And this Easter she celebrated with a whole cloud of witnesses gone before her, the resurrection and the life that never ends.

And we can only say, "Well done! Congratulations!" to her, and "Thank you!" to God – for the grace, the amazing grace, that grants us all this wondrous life, and the one to come. Amen.