



Eliza Ellen Gifford

April 25, 1951 - January 14, 2016

Portsmouth - Eliza Ellen Gifford, named for her grandmothers, was born April 25, 1951, in West Stewartstown, NH. Her parents, Dr. William H. Gifford and Dr. Marjorie A. Parsons, determined early on that despite her disability, Eliza would live a full life. And did she ever!

At that time there was no special ed. in the schools, so Sister Mary Edward from Our Lady of Grace Academy taught Eliza to read and write. Later, the Vershire sheltered workshop was founded, and Eliza and many others learned life skills.

Growing up in Colebrook, Eliza participated fully in town life. She marched in every Fourth of July and Memorial Day parade, she played with all the local children, she was very active in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and she developed a life-long enthusiasm for sports when she could be found loudly cheering for the Colebrook Academy Mohawks basketball team at every home game. She was one of the most rabid Red Sox fans ever known – but she never forgave them for trading Johnny Damon! Many a night at Great Bay was spent with her friends watching Tom Brady and the Patriots.

Eliza was not shy...to say the least, and she could be enterprising. Her parents shared a waiting room for their patients, and each had separate offices off the waiting room. One day her mother was sitting at her desk and heard the following exchange:

Eliza to a patient: "Would you like some good advice?"

Patient: "Yes, I'd like some good advice."

Eliza: "It will cost you ten cents."

Patient: "I guess good advice is worth ten cents."

Money was exchanged, and Eliza promptly handed the patient a Salada Tea bag label, which at that time had quotes and sayings printed on it. Both parties to the exchange were pleased.

When Eliza turned nineteen, she left home to live at Great Bay in one of the very first group homes in New Hampshire. It was at Great Bay and Christ Church that she found

many new friends who became her second family.

Over the years Eliza worked in a variety of jobs. Her last major job was working for Beswick Engineering where she “put o-rings on screws.” She absolutely loved working there, and everyone treated her with kindness and respect. After retiring from Beswick, she spent time volunteering at Fair Tide among other endeavors.

Eliza was a well-traveled woman. She went on Disney cruises; visited Hawaii and Branson, Missouri; and made a “pilgrimage” to Graceland to pay homage to her favorite singer, Elvis. Eliza loved music of all kinds and knew the words to hundreds of songs from nursery-rhyme ditties to Elvis tunes and Broadway shows. Her absolute favorite was The Sound of Music.

In the 1990’s Eliza began to paint. She stopped for a while and then picked it up again a few years ago. She was amazing! Her works ran the gamut from straight representational works to abstracts, such as her painting called “Gum Tree” that one of her sister’s colleagues thought might be by Hundertwasser. However, all the paintings were the same in one major way: they were either beautiful or full of happy colors and activities which reflected Eliza’s outlook on life.

Eliza had some of the very best people skills. When her mother died, she and all of her siblings had been living away from Colebrook for many years. As people came to pay their respects, Eliza knew the names of every one of them. Her sister Bonnie could recognize the family someone was from, but for the life of her, she couldn’t pull up the names. She asked Eliza how she was able to remember everyone. Eliza looked at her Bonnie in amazement and simply said, “I took the time to get to know them.”

Yup, she took the time to get to know them. And they, in turn, knew Eliza. She was one of the richest people ever when she died on January 14, 2016. She had, and still has, hundreds of friends.

Eliza is survived by her sister Bonnie Stevenson and her husband Bill; her brother Dr. William P. Gifford, his wife Roz and their son Paul; her niece Heather Jackson and her husband John and children Bryn Clair and Aislyn Gail; her nephew Ian Stevenson, his wife Chris and son Jack Aubrey; and her brother-in-law Warren Fick. She was predeceased by her parents and her sister Gail Shane.

A memorial service is being held at 11 a.m. on Monday, January 18, 2016, at Christ Church, 1035 Lafayette Road, Portsmouth. A committal service will be held in Colebrook

at a later date.

Donations of remembrance may be sent to Great Bay Services, 2061 Woodbury Avenue, Newington, NH 03801. <http://www.greatbayservices.org/>

Comments



“ My Sympathy to Bonne and Family.
I fond memories of Eliza I was a student there. we were in the same class together at OLGA many memories of Eliza with Sister Mary Edward:
we were great friends I use to live across the street from her house
I went to her house and spent some time together and talk about RED SOX and watch red sox game, and yes she had a happy face on all the time,
God bless



Bibiane E. d'Anjou Brunelle - January 26, 2016 at 08:56 AM



“ All our condolences to the Gifford family. Francine & Andre Champagne

Francine Champagne - January 22, 2016 at 06:21 PM



“ Carole Gifford Dillon lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Carole Gifford Dillon - January 22, 2016 at 11:05 AM



“ Liza and her parents were such a big influence to each individual and the community at large. All of us growing up with Liza have special memories . We were touched in some way by her enthusiasm for life, her willingness and desire to be friends with everyone, and her caring personality. I smile when I remember her. We were all so lucky to have grown up with her. I think she taught us kids that grew up with her- that different is not only OK -but special. My sympathy to you all.
Shari Patterson Covey



“ So sorry to hear of your loss. Being a country kid, I was never down street much, but I do remember Eliza - her smile and her singing as she strolled up the street. We should all learn to be so content, May the dear Lord be with you as I am sure Eliza is with him.

Sheila Porter Beauchemin - January 19, 2016 at 07:16 PM



“ Our condolences go out to the family and I can remember her marching in the parades in Colebrook. I also remember Doc Gifford making a house call to give me a shot that I didn't want but he chased me around the house until hid in my bed with my head under the pillow but left the part he needed to give the shot out and he finished his job.

Haven & Peggy Haynes - January 19, 2016 at 02:49 PM



“ It makes one sad to know that 'Liza has gone from us yet we celebrate with her as she enters the presence of our Lord and know that she is close by Jesus' side, one of his favorite souls. Even though she had moved from Colebrook and her attendance at St. Stephen's was limited to visits home, she was still very much a member when she was able to be with us. It had been and remained her service to take the collection on those Sundays. Always so happy to be with us and be of service just like everyone else at St. S. May she and all the faithful departed, through the mercy of Christ, rest in peace.

Rev. Marlyn M. Neary, Retired Vicar of St. Stephen's.



Rev. Marlyn M Neary, Retired Vicar, St S - January 19, 2016 at 01:31 PM



“ I remember someone mentioned to Liza that her socks didn't match. She raised her head, threw back her shoulders and defiantly said: "They're my socks!" I loved her independent streak!

Richard Analla - January 19, 2016 at 08:44 AM



“ Rosemary Mulliken lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Rosemary Mulliken - January 19, 2016 at 08:04 AM



“ Bonnie and Family-I'm saddened to hear of Eliza's passing. She was so special in so many ways and to so many people. My Friday nights at Jax just wouldn't have been the same without Eliza-I always looked forward to seeing her and hearing a new story! Everyone should strive to be the kind of person Eliza was; I envied her knowledge, free spirit and always present smile. She was "Miss Colebrook" for many of us for many years. God bless you, Eliza.

Rosemary Mulliken - January 19, 2016 at 08:13 AM



“ Jackie & Lenny Caires lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Jackie & Lenny Caires - January 19, 2016 at 07:16 AM



“ Tami Lewis lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Tami Lewis - January 18, 2016 at 08:36 PM



“ Eliza volunteered at Fair Tide for years and brought us such joy while she was there. We had many a conversation about Johnny Damon and how great the Red Sox were, she could never accept that he went to the Yankees. She also would add to the atmosphere at the store and sing along with the radio. She was our happiest volunteer and we so appreciate her commitment to our agency. Our hearts go out to her family at this very sad time.

barbara mcgaughey - January 18, 2016 at 08:23 PM



“ Ken Knapp lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Ken Knapp - January 18, 2016 at 08:01 PM



“ condolences to the Gifford family

Ken - January 18, 2016 at 08:03 PM



“ Audie Porter lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Audie Porter - January 18, 2016 at 07:49 PM



“ My deepest condolences to Eliza's family and friends. I remember her so well from my Colebrook years. I'm so glad that she lived such a full life.

Joy Frizzell - January 18, 2016 at 07:45 PM



“ My sympathy to all the family. As a Colebrook native, 1 year younger than Eliza I grew up knowing her always seeing her at all the town games, parades, etc. She was one of kind gentle being, whom everyone enjoyed. She did live life to the fullest and I admire that. How many times I would see her walking up Copper Hill towards home... The miles she put on, put us all to shame. She will never be forgotten



Cindy Noyes Bissonette - January 18, 2016 at 07:30 PM



“ I do remember Eliza at our basketball games, when I was an OLGA student. Liza's cheers were the loudest and full of enthusiasm!!! She was an example of the best of Colebrook NH!!! Rest in peace and my deepest sympathy to your family.Fatima

Fatima Polo Laperle

Fatima Polo Laperle - January 18, 2016 at 06:09 PM



“ I have such fond memories of Eliza. When I worked in my great grandfather's store, Fullers, Liza would always come in and look at the cards. She took each one out carefully, read it and then put it back. I also remember reading books to her in the office waiting for the doctor. Though I have not seen her in years, I am thankful she had such a wonderful full life. I send my deepest sympathy to all the family. She will always hold a special place in the hearts of many. Love, Lynne Owen Placey

Lynne O Placey - January 18, 2016 at 05:45 PM



“ Patty Buck lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Patty Buck - January 18, 2016 at 05:41 PM



“ Eliza was a very special memory of my childhood in Colebrook. She always brought a smile to everyones face . May God Bless Eliza Gifford!!

Patty Buck - January 18, 2016 at 05:35 PM



“ Jan And Phil lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Jan and Phil - January 18, 2016 at 05:22 PM



“ Danielle Dion lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



danielle Dion - January 18, 2016 at 05:09 PM



“ I remember Eliza well and her ready smile. I left Colebrook in 1970 and my parents not long after. Reading her obituary just now I am sad at her passing but happy that she made such a great life for herself. Though I am not surprised. God speed Eliza.

danielle Dion - January 18, 2016 at 05:12 PM



“ Linda Clogston lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Linda Clogston - January 18, 2016 at 03:51 PM



“ Rosalie King lit a candle in memory of Eliza Ellen Gifford



Rosalie King - January 18, 2016 at 03:09 PM



“ Very sad news to hear , so sorry for your loss. Liza's friends and Family. I remember her well and of course her Mom & Dad. She was a remarkable person. R.I.P. Eliza



Jane Marie Dustin - January 18, 2016 at 02:51 PM



“ Eliza was a special lady who loved and was loved by many. Our family's life was blessed by sharing time with her in church. Eliza loved to sing hymns and praised the Lord with her gift. She was so helpful with her Altar Guild work and always was meticulous in how the altar was set up. My life was richer when Eliza and I had time together shopping. Recently Eliza was visited weekly by a young man with disabilities and I know she touched his life. Thank to her family for sharing Eliza with so many.

Mary Fontaine - January 17, 2016 at 12:49 PM



“ My sympathies to Eliza's family. Eliza was friends with my sister, Irene Gosselin, for many years. Eliza would always give me a warm and friendly greeting whenever I would come into Great Bay. I have fond memories of Eliza and Irene sitting together and helping each other in the EDS room. I am sure they are together in heaven sharing their bright and friendly ways.



“ Over the many years that Eliza graced our Christ Church parish family, we were thoroughly enriched by her and her subtle, but distinctive charm, her graceful ways of opining her thoughts and her passion for all of life. At the top of her list was her stalwart belief in Jesus as our Savior, and running a VERY CLOSE second was her love of the famed Boston Red Sox. You'd better not even have one scintilla of negativity about the team without Eliza sensing that as she guided you back to positive, rational thinking! And Eliza was a proud recipient of a myriad of medals awarded for her successes in the Special Olympics. In recent years Eliza was also an active member of our Altar Guild, helping with preparations before Sunday Mass. Our Christ Church family was truly graced by Eliza, and memories of her and her contributions to our parish life are indelibly written on our hearts and in our minds. Thanks, Eliza, and may your new home, surrounded by God's infinite love and the spirit of those you love who have gone before you, bring you eternal joy and comfort. And your passion for the Red Sox? Long may it wave!

Gary Dozier - January 17, 2016 at 06:17 AM



“ I never knew Eliza, but loved her parents and Bonnie was a classmate of mine at Middlebury. My condolences to all her family and friends.

Nancy Dodge - January 18, 2016 at 09:26 AM



“ Our family new the Gifford family well and spent many hours at their home. Eliza and I attended kindergarten together beneath the Episcopal Church, with Mrs Harrigan as our teacher. She never missed a basketball game or town parade. She was truly a full participant in Colebrook life, known and loved by all. Bless her.

Randall - January 18, 2016 at 03:43 PM



“ Remember Eliza well, always walking down main st. Singing in Colebrook, she liked going to the movie theater on Friday nights. She smiled all the way down main st. At all the parades waving her flag. Bless her as she travels home with her mom and dad.

Cindy Brigham - January 18, 2016 at 04:15 PM



“ I remember Eliza while growing up in Colebrook. she was loved by all. My condolences to her family and her extended family.

Diane Ducret-Mork - January 18, 2016 at 04:41 PM



“ What a beautiful memorial tribute--no one could ever forget Eliza--and the special way that Herb and Marjorie raised this girl

Pat Banfill - January 18, 2016 at 05:01 PM



“ Eliza was our sweetie. Liz and I picked her up for church and met so many of her friends at Great Bay. We talked Red Sox and how we were sure there wouldn't be any Yankees in heaven. EXCEPT Johnny Damon. We continued to drive her to church when she went to Serenity and it was sad for us when her healthy prevented her from attending anymore. Eliza made an impression on so many people and touched our hearts. We miss her and her good advice.

Lynda Swartz - January 19, 2016 at 08:23 AM



“ Eliza attended OLGA when I was a student there. I remember that we were in the same class and I have many memories of Eliza and her interactions with Sister Mary Edward; these were the days when there was no such thing as specialized education, but we were luck to have a private school and dedicated teachers who helped bring out the best in everyone. Please accept my sincere condolences.

Myra Daley Ellingwood - January 19, 2016 at 04:38 PM



“ Eliza was a very special person. I remember her when she was a child, watching her very favorite wrestling matches on TV. She had to dress the part with her Indian headdress. She embarrassed her parents at Lancaster Fair one year because she decided to sell Salada tea tags for a nickel apiece. When mom found out, she sent Eliza out to give the money back. That didn't work too well, but she tried. Eliza was never treated as different or "special". She was just one the the family. I will miss her and her enthusiasm for life. God speed, Eliza. Sha

Sharon Gould Leicht - January 19, 2016 at 05:55 PM



“ My condolences to the Gifford family. I've known the family for years. My e mother- in-lazw worked for them for years as their house keeper, Griselder Hartlen. I was married to her son, Larry. I used to go up to their house a lot. I used to walk Liza home from down town a lot, to make sure she got home ok. She was aq smart girl, as said, she had an awesome memory. Dr. Giffords son William and daughter Bonnie are my 2 oldest God parents. Once again, our condolences and prayers are for the family.

brenda - January 19, 2016 at 06:44 PM



“ My condolences to you Bonnie & William and your families. Eliza will always be remembered for her beautiful smile and her dedication to Colebrook and now may she RIP. Prayers are with you all at this difficult time.

Cookie (Boudle) Lambert

Gloria Lambert - January 29, 2016 at 02:39 PM