

On the way home.....the National Aquarium in Baltimore

February 4, 2015



Linda prepared a delicious meal.

On the way home, we had a lovely dinner with our long time friends Linda and Neil Doran. Linda made an incredible roast, and we got to see some of their handiwork: sewing and crochet projects of Linda's and wood work, trunks and plaques and more from Neil. We caught up in word and video.



My reflection among the acrylic cylinders of bubbling water, National Aquarium, Baltimore

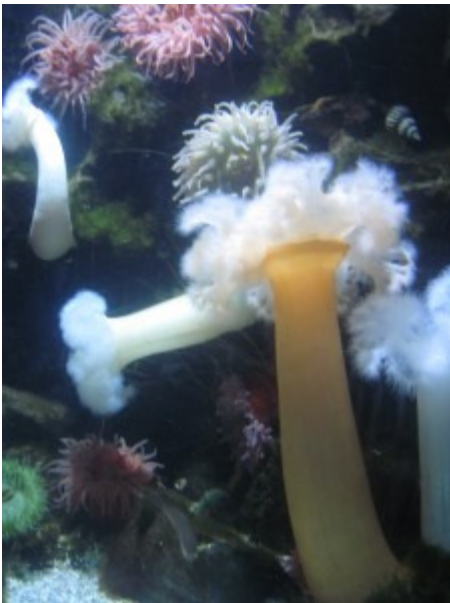


Moon jellies



Jellyfish Ballet

I also had a great day at the National Aquarium in Baltimore. I had been really sad to learn that the National Aquarium in Washington had closed since our last visit in January, 2013. I was a longtime fan of that small gem of an aquarium and well remember my 2013 visit (helped by about 100 photos). That was our nation's first aquarium; I'm still sad they closed it, relocating many of the delightful fishes and other creatures to the one in Baltimore. I quote from <http://www.aqua.org/about/our-story> "Originally established in 1873 in Wood's Hole, Massachusetts, National Aquarium, Washington, DC, was considered the nation's first public aquarium. In 1878, the National Aquarium moved to the site of the Washington Monument, and in 1932, the Aquarium was incorporated into the lower level of the Commerce Building. Federal funds were eliminated from the operating budget for the National Aquarium, Washington, DC, in 1982. Threatened with closing, the National Aquarium Society was formed to keep the Aquarium open."



Gorgeous anemone



The Queen Angelfish is a beautiful creature

You can see the whole story online. Too bad my old bumper sticker from the original Washington Aquarium is almost worn out; I can't get another one now! But I will post some photos from my day at the Baltimore location, and their new "Blacktip Reef" exhibit.



Calypso, the 500 lb. female green sea turtle with three flippers gets along very well, indeed!



Hecqui's Shell Dweller is tiny and cute



Don't you just love Longhorn Cowfish? They have such expressive faces.



The colors and shapes are fantastic and beautiful.

Farewell to Wally February 5, 2015



Wally and Sorbet in the 55 gallon tank

Wally, my precious goldfish, who I adopted in 2006, died Tuesday, February 3rd, 2015. His death was a real surprise to me. True, Wally had been having trouble off and on since the beginning of December. First he wouldn't eat; I tried a couple of kinds of medicines. No luck. Then I tested for Ph—it was low, and raising it seemed to make him better. He began eating again. I thought he was feeling pretty well, eating and swimming with Sorbet.



Wally as a tiny "baby" just after he came home with me from Curves.



Baby Wally joins the other fish



Wally, with his pals, Muffin, and Sorbet

Then recently he started resting on top of the water, didn't want to eat much, and he looked a bit bloated. Next he was floating upside down and even swimming upside down.

This is swim bladder disease. Online info urged peeled peas to force the gas/air inside to come out in Wally's poop. So I got Wally to eat some peeled peas; I'd try to do this three times a day, as advised, for several days.. He began swimming more, albeit upside down. Then Monday Wally was swimming around the tank with his pal Sorbet, right side up. I was jubilant. Tuesday morning he was still swimming right side up, looking perfectly normal. Except...he didn't want his breakfast. I thought, well, it's Wally's way of recuperating after swim bladder distress. I had to go out, but when I returned later about 3:30, Wally was dead.

Wally was left at Curves back in June 2006 when one of the members went on vacation. She'd been taking care of Wally for her college age daughter. Wally was the size of my pinky finger nail and was all alone in a plain glass bowl. Feeling sorry for him, I bought him a plant, and some colored glass "stones" and fed him. When the lady returned, she said her daughter really wasn't that interested in Wally, and I might have him. I was delighted!



Wally, with his pals, Muffin, and Sorbet

I have photos of him, so very tiny, holding his own in tank of other, larger baby fish. But Wally was scrappy and he'd go after food. Eventually he grew and grew; he would always eat from my fingers. Wally was indomitable and personable, and beautiful, as well. His tank mate was Sorbet, a descendent of my original two goldfish, Tangy and Callie (Sorbet is 14 years old) Poor Wally! I'll miss him! Gard and I managed to dig a grave near the back of the house; I kept pots under plastic there and the earth was not too frozen so we could dig. Rest in peace, precious Wally.



Wally, sunlit and happy

My brother, August Ronald Wilkoc

March 11, 2015



Ronnie and Dee waiting for Santa Claus

I haven't blogged in over a month. Originally I was going to tell you about my latest trip to see son Michael and daughter-in-law Cveta out on Maui, and of course, include snorkeling photos (and who doesn't enjoy looking at fishes and sea turtles?). I will do that eventually, but first I want and need to celebrate the life of my wonderful brother Ron.



Ronnie as a toddler in our canvas, yes—canvas—baby pool

I returned home from Maui, Sunday, March 1, 2015. Monday morning my sister-in-law Barbara called me to say that my brother Ronnie (which is what I always called him when younger) had passed away suddenly in the night. It was a total shock to all of us.

Although Ron and Barb bought a condo on the beach down on North Myrtle Beach years ago, until this past December they still spent May until end of Oct./beginning of Nov. in the Poconos, which is where we'd see them. Ron's congestive heart problem has been worse the last 2 years but he was on medication and it was always being balanced. I talked with him Fri. 2/27 from Maui because he said he'd been overnight in hospital because of a fall and a hairline hip fracture....but he said he was fine. I'm wondering if the pain meds sort of hurt the delicate balance of his heart meds....I don't know...his death was a big shock and surprise to all, including Barbara. I just saw Ron's law school roommate at the funeral service and Bernie said he'd also talked to Ron 2/27 and Ron had said, "I see golf in our future" because they had actively kept up their friendship all these years, playing golf at least once a year somewhere.



Here we are in winter garb, Tuckahoe, NY about 6 and 4 years old. Don't you love the clothes?

Tuesday afternoon and part of Wednesday we drove down to Columbia, S.C. where the funeral and burial was. Monday I had made a photo journal with pictures of Ron and I through the years. You know me and my photo journals. The first 8 yrs of our lives we were in a neighborhood without many kids... one other kid was also our friend. So Ron and I always played together. We were our own best friends. Anyway, going thru photos and putting it together was good because we had it for the visitation Thursday and I gave it to Barbara (made a 2nd for us). And.....it distracted me. I do better if I don't think about this, if I work. Fortunately my watercolor classes for the Jointure classes just started.

I still find it hard to believe my "little brother" is dead. We had plans.....I had things I wanted to discuss with him, etc. etc etc. So I think I have to absorb it all in bits and pieces. What gives me comfort is that when we saw each other we always hugged on getting together and on leaving and we said we loved each other (and Barb). So this is a comfort for me. One of my college friends, Dale, who has also lost her brother, said it this way, "It is so hard to lose the one person in life who shares the earliest memories, the family "in jokes" and so much history." And I might add, Ron was a rock for me, a rock with a great sense of humor.

At the funeral service I edited and shortened what I had written, which is just below. I've also included words from sons Michael and Shawn, who couldn't be there. Talryn drove down with us and was one of his Uncle Ron's pallbearers. I need to say an amazing thing which happened at the visitation....Tal apparently told Gard that if maybe Ron was around watching us, he might make the lights in the church (where the visitation and service were) blink on and off. Amazingly, about five minutes later, all the power went off in the church, then on, and then off again. Amazing.

Barbara's family, her brother and two sisters and their families are all down there and they couldn't have been more warm and welcoming to Gard, Tal, and me. They made us feel a part of the family group immediately, and I am truly grateful to them and to Barbara.



Although blurry, I had to include this photo of Ron on his precious green tricycle. I remember him riding it so well and what it meant to him as a little boy. The picture is from when we lived in Tuckahoe, so he is only 4 or 5.

I won't make excuses for all the photos here. Instead, I thank my husband Gard who prompted me to look through all our photos and create a photo journal. He also suggested, and I will follow up on this, that I finally finish the illustrations for a picture book I wrote several years ago, *Ronnie's Friend Trike* and then I'll dedicate it to Ron. Both great ideas.



Ronnie, about 10 years old, with his “catch”. We usually threw the fishes back.

My Words for Ron at his service at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Columbia, S.C.

Ron was, for me, the best brother ever. We were very close, even in age, 22 months apart. Yes, we might argue or “fight” some, when little, but we were our own best friends. We played countless games together, most of them games we made up.

We played “school” with our stuffed animals sitting at boxes for desks. And when there was a small furnace fire, we put out a blanket, placed the stuffed animals on it, tied it all up, and “saved” the animals. So you see Ronnie's love for animals started early in life (oh, yes, I always called him Ronnie, not Ron). As an adult he worked for animal welfare, taking care of cats and dogs up in Monroe County. You might know how he rescued Ms. Lucky as he found her as a newborn blind kitten while jogging in the Poconos.

We'd make a “ghost house” at Halloween and charge Mom and Dad a nickel to walk through our bedroom “decorated” with paper spider webs, black crayoned bats, and more. Mom always said

“As if it weren’t hard enough to keep the dust down, you invent more for the haunted house.”
But she gladly paid the admission.



Our Mom, with Ron and me at Interlaken Lake

We’d make “fun carnivals” for neighbors with games. We’d play cowboys. Ronnie was usually Hopalong Cassidy. I always had to be Dale Evans, because she was the only cowgirl we knew (we weren’t familiar with Annie Oakley as kids). We’d swim at the lake on which our garden apartment development was located, and we’d fish for “sunnies” which we then threw back.

Ron was always kind, and protective. He faced up to Bully Bertie in my defense while I cowardly ran home to “Mommy”. Ron worked in the Public Defender’s Office in NYC for a while before joining Clupak as their international lawyer. As my husband Gard said, “thanks to Ron and all the contracts he facilitated around the world, the “sanforizing process”, basically a process which treats cotton and cotton blends so they don’t shrink, are world wide.” So when your sanforized clothes don’t shrink or your clothes don’t wrinkle, you can thank Ron.

I have to add though, that he has said he’d have rather been a Forest Park Ranger than a lawyer.



Ron on the Eastchester High School football team



Ron and Princeton Baseball You can see Ron just under the number 6

I thought all the traveling he did for work was glamorous; he said it just took him away from Barbara and he much preferred staying home.

Our Dad used to give me a doll every Christmas, even when I was an adult. After he died, when I was 28 and Ron was 26, Ronnie would bring me back dolls from the foreign countries he went to.

Ron loved sports, and played in the Little League on the Scorpions, a team our Dad coached. Ron was catcher, and he also was catcher on the Eastchester High School team. He played football for Eastchester and started to, at Princeton, but a broken leg or foot stopped that. Later on he played golf and I'm glad he got to play a lot of good courses, and Barb even learned how to play.



Golf was a great pleasure for Ron!

Ronnie could paint really well, although he only did a few paintings. I have one (and one from our Mom, who also painted). An early interest was gardening; you should have seen all the lovely landscaping around their Poconos home.

And of course, both Ron and Barb were and are very active in the churches where they live.

He was a fantastic uncle, as you know, and some of you nieces and nephews are here now. Our sons always looked forward to Ron and Barb visits.



Ron and Dee at Gard's and my wedding



Gard, Ron, 3 year old Mike, Mom and Dad—Interlaken Garden Apts., Eastchester, New York

Ronnie was always kind and helpful and he didn't want to worry you. He wouldn't tell me he was in a hospital until he was out...when his medications had been adjusted, for example, or when he was sent home with his hairline hip fracture. I was talking with son Shawn about that and Shawn said, "Uncle Ron was a laid-back sort of guy. He's the type that if he died, he'd call you a week later to tell you."

Well, Ron, I'll be listening, or watching, for that call.

I love you!



Barbara at the beach, Long Island



Ron at the beach, Long Island—looks to me like a great photo of a surfer dude!

This is the poem that Michael wrote and texted me from out on Maui

Uncle Ron

Ron knew how to laugh; he knew how to play.
When others were down, he could make their day.

He was willing to help, he didn't mind.
He could reach out to others and be sympathetic and kind.

When I started my career in New York City, he was there to guide.
Always chipper and funny, never there to chide.

He bought me some of my first candy when I was four,
Ironically a pack of Chuckles, I could not want for more.

Chuckles, that's Ron

Today at the beach a stranger smiled from the sea,
And for a moment I saw Ron smiling, laughing, "chuckling" at me.



Poconos 9/11/14 Ron and Barbara meet Michael and Cveta



Talryn, Barbara, & Ron in my garden



Ron and I in the Poconos September 11, 2014

Below this photo are the words emailed to me from Shawn, who lives in PA, but was out in San Francisco for a business conference at the time.



Cousin George, April and Shawn, Barbara and Ron at Shawn's and April's wedding

“You already know that Ron Wilkoc was a caring and generous man. A loving husband and a cool Uncle. A lover of life, family, and animals. I don't have to tell you that. But I may need to say that visiting Uncle Ron and Aunt Barb in NY as a kid was always exciting and memorable. Not just for the city but for the formidable elevator and hallway leading to their apartment. For the delectable treats and impeccably wrapped packages that lay within, and for the warmth both from their company and from the fire Ron would inevitably light. Visiting them in the Poconos later in life was just as fun, and the advice they gave me as I grew up was as invaluable as that green sofa I still use today. And then, married and with cats as well, April and I had the good fortune to visit them in beautiful (and warmer-than-Pittsburgh) South Carolina, where more fond memories were made over good laughs and even better wine. The man ran marathons, flew all over the world, fought bears in the PA wilderness (probably), but always found time to be a great Uncle, he will be missed but always remembered.”

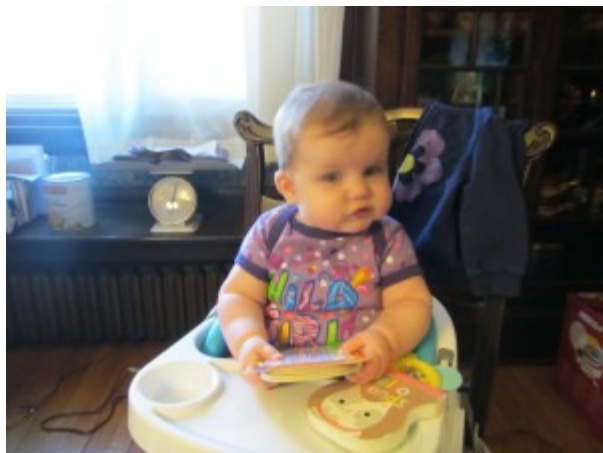


Ron grills; Talryn plays the ukulele September 11, 2014



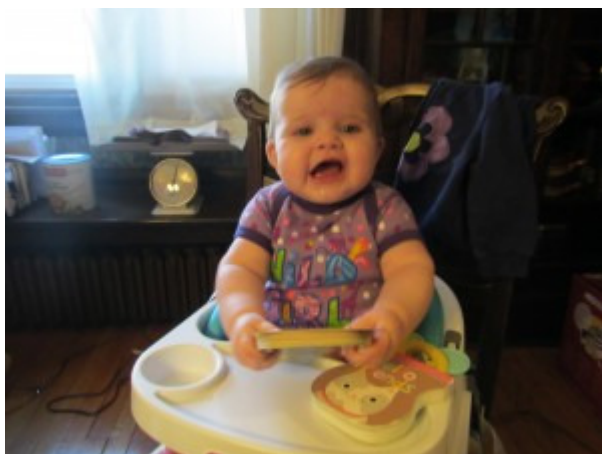
Ron and Barbara at our last visit in the Poconos, September 2014. I love all our celebrations. Ron would grill and Barb had all these fancy appetizers. We'd laugh and talk, and of course, play with the current kitty (or kitties), Napster in September.

Easter and more April 21, 2015

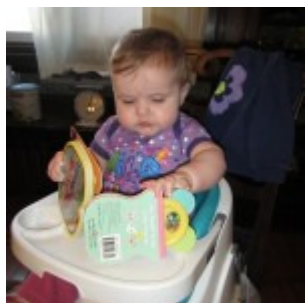


This looks like an interesting volume.

Mostly I'll let these photos speak for themselves. The first five are from our visit out to Pittsburgh mid-March; the others are from Easter. Our trip to Pittsburgh was a great time, too, complete with a visit to the zoo and aquarium, and a visit to see the kitties, Leo and Luna.



Hey, Guys, I got a good book here!



Hmmmm, this is really interesting



Tone it down, Guys, I'm trying to read my good book.



Jillian and I enjoying each other and a toy Talryn gave her. Note that she had her “space” helmet on. The three months went fast and she no longer has to wear it. .

But on to Easter....



Tal took this photo of Shawn and me coloring Easter eggs. He colored some also.



Personable Easter eggs, complete with “hair”

First came the coloring of Easter eggs Saturday night. Shawn and Tal and I colored 18 of them; mostly I made faces and added little wigs. Shawn’s and Tal’s were prettier.



Jillian and Tal. She loves fooling with the dolphin wind chimes in our kitchen.



Jillian and I enjoy a joke while blowing up balloons before our Easter church service.

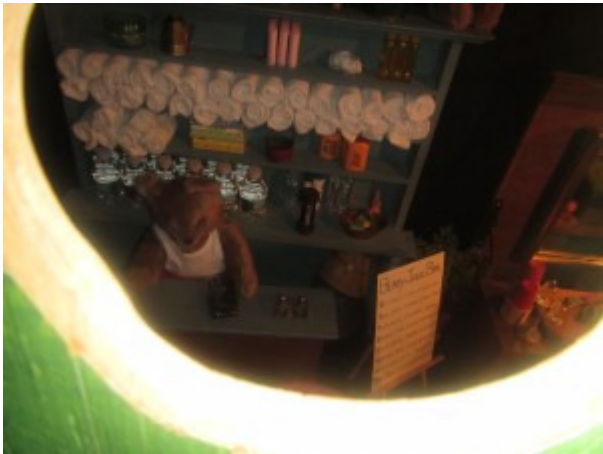


Our church at Easter with balloons and blooms, Christ Presbyterian Church, Martinsville, NJ

Then, Easter Sunday our church, Christ Presbyterian Church of Martinsville, always has helium balloons (which Gard and Shawn and I inflated, with Jillian raptly watching). Jillian was a gem during the service, and during fellowship after. We always have a lot of food and fellowship after our service. After a fine service, Shawn and April and Jillian went up to spend the rest of Easter with Pat and George and all.



Shawn and Jillian...Jillian inspects an Easter gift



A peek into the Bunny Hole at The Magic Shop showing the Juice Bar for the bears and other forest creatures

Monday, on their way to Pittsburgh (sort of) the three met us in Oldwick, where we visited The Magic Shop, a most fascinating store. Each spring they have the Bunny Hole—children can slide down into it, or crawl through a hole; adults can just open a full size door. A huge room has trees with peepholes at different levels through which you see what the inhabitants down the Bunny Hole are doing. This year's theme was sports. One diorama had bears scuba diving among fishes. Another had a spa with a Berry Juice Bar. There was golf, and other sports represented. Stuffed rabbits, bears, squirrels, and other creatures cavorted and did all sort of cute activities. Amazing how much work goes into this (you can put a donation in an unobtrusive little basket; the money goes to Matheny Home). Other rooms in The Magic Shop have clothes for little ones, unusual toys and books, and there are even two rooms of linens, plate settings, jewelry, and accessories.



Enjoying the patio of The General Store after lunch there on Easter Monday

Finally we had a late lunch at The General Store and enjoyed the sunshine in the Adirondack chairs there.



Jillian and I chill out outside The General Store in Oldwick

What a wonderful Easter weekend it was!

The Baptism of Jillian Clisura Patton

May 22, 2015



Oh, my! What a special day I've got ahead of me! Jillian on the morning of her baptism

This was an amazing and precious weekend, the weekend of Jillian Clisura Patton's baptism at Greenfield Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA. Gard and I had come a few days earlier, and had enjoyed every moment.



I think Pittsburgh is such a pretty place to live. Admiring the view on our stroll..Pat and George and puppy Rudy, Missy and Doris, Gard and I, and Jillian!



Here I am with Grampa Gard and Grammy Dee

On the actual Sunday of her baptism, the church service and ceremony, with dinner after, began at 4:30 pm. Before that, while Shawn and April rid the front crabapple tree of gypsy moths, followed by a church session meeting, Gard and I, Pat and George Clisura, with puppy Rudy, and April's aunts, Missy and Doris, took Jillian to the Bud Hammer Park nearby and had a magical time. The weather could not have been better—60s and bright sunshine, it was perfect. We all had such a good time at the park, celebrating Jillian and her first time on the baby bucket swings.



I can't quite reach Rudy, Granmpa George and Granma Pat's puppy. Good dog!

For her baptism of Jillian wore a sweet dress crocheted by Doris' aunt (or great Aunt) when she was 93. She has a little slip on under the dress.



Here's my outfit all laid out; there's even a slip!



Here I am getting all prettied up with Mama's help

Jillian was a full participant in her own baptism. I never saw such a baptism. First she interacted with family members before the service. Then she found things to do during the church service and sermon. Then Pastor Jenn, and this was her first baptismal ceremony, called Shawn, April, and Jillian up front. As Clerk of Session Pastor Jenn told Shawn, "You have a part", and handed him her iPad. He said, something like "As Clerk of Session I present Jillian Clisura Patton, with her parents April and Shawn, for her baptism." Jillian kept reaching for the pitcher of water (to be poured into the font) so Shawn finally held it up for her and she put her little hand in it.



I amused myself well during the regular church service. The wood of the pew is very shiny.



My pretty dress was crocheted by Aunt Doris' aunt when she was 93. I just love it!

Then Jillian wanted the water when it was in the font, started to fuss a little, but stopped. She didn't cry at all when Pastor Jenn took her and even splashed her hair four times; in fact Jillian was quite happy and her hair got all curly on top. Very cute. Everyone was really a part of the service and we all said we'd help raise her in the church.



I can help; hand me that pitcher of water.



Okay, I think Pastor Jenn is getting to the most important part. I'm doing good, right, Mama and Dada?



Ohhhhhhhh! Holy water! Ohhhhh! Four times on my head, feels good. I am now fully baptized, a Child of God!



I wonder what Grampa George's mustache feels like. Pat and George Clisura with Jillian



Who are you looking at? I'm here with Aunt Missy and Aunt Doris



I'm with Grampa Gard and Grammy Dee after the baptismal ceremony. Next step Fellowship. Let's go!

After, in the adjoining fellowship hall, we all enjoyed the catered meal Shawn had picked up from Double Wide Grill and delicious cake April had bought. Pat had baked heart-shaped cookies.



Okay, everyone having fun?! Of course you are!



Can you believe how pretty my cake is!? Everyone thought it was delicious.

We had shish-ka-bobs, pierogies (black and orange because this is Pittsburgh, home of the Steelers and that's what's done), various wraps, mashed potatoes, and more. A congregation member made punch. Everything was delicious.



My baptismal ceremony was lovely!

Afterwards, I got to wheel Jillian around and around during the clean-up! What a pleasure!



I've got to call all my friends and tell them about my baptism!