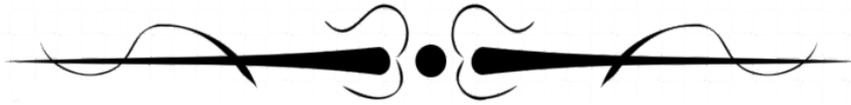


# Jean M. Brose



*December 9, 1919 - July 9, 2021*

Our reading from Ecclesiastes paints a picture of the ongoing seasons of life, both good and not-so-good. If, like Jean, you live to be 101 years old, you will have witnessed most all of these seasons, and many times over.



One of those seasons for Jean was in the years that her family spent at the Lanona Lodge. *It was a time to break down and a time to build up.* Just a reminder, the name comes from a combination of La Crosse and Winona, two very important places in Jean's life. As Jeanine mentioned earlier, her mom was 9 years old when her parents bought the lodge. They offered a warm meal and a good night's sleep on Highway 61 just south of Winona. Not unlike businesses today in the midst of our Covid pandemic, they undoubtedly faced any number of challenges in keeping the place afloat.

The country felt broken. It was the beginning of the Great Depression. All kinds of workers, with or without jobs, would stop at the lodge for a meal. Sometimes they would chop wood and bring it into the house as a way of paying for their lunch.

Jean's mother did a great job of fixing a tasty meal out of meager provisions: turnips, potatoes, vegetables from the garden, fish from the Mississippi River, and – are you ready for this – canned rattlesnake. Yum! These foods and more provided much-needed sustenance. And if tired travelers had a little extra spending money, they were treated to a dish of ice cream. Jean and her parents worked tirelessly to build up their little corner of our country.

Another season in Jean's life was focused on education. *It was a time to plant and a time to pluck up what was planted.* Jean went to country schools and eventually on to Winona High School. She attended college at Winona State and got a teaching degree. She returned to those country schools, only this time as the teacher.

I always enjoy hearing stories of country schools, probably because I attended one myself. Teachers who cared about the kids were worth their weight in gold. We were always overhearing what the other classes were studying – a kind of review of what we'd learned and a preview of coming attractions.

I remember my country school teachers with great affection. They were like second moms to me. I have a sense that the students Jean taught had some of those same feelings. She planted lots of seeds in those days – seeds of writing, math, and spelling; seeds of self-worth, patience, and resilience. And get this, the "plucking up," the harvesting of those seeds continues to this very day.

Yet another season in Jean's life involved her work as a librarian. *It was a time to keep and a time to throw away.* In many ways, this might have been an extension of Jean's time in the classroom. She regularly made decisions about which books to buy and how information would be shared. This happened at both St. Mary's in Winona and Methodist Hospital here in Rochester. Countless minds were shaped and stretched by the books and materials Jean offered. I don't know if Jean was actively involved in the move to books-on-tape and e-books, but perhaps she saw these trends coming. She regularly made decisions about which resources to keep and which to let go.

A final season in Jean's life stretched over a long period of time. We could refer to it in many different ways, but let's call it *a time to mourn and a time to dance.* The fact of the matter is, many people slow up in the last third of life, but not Jean. For years Jean had had an adventuresome spirit. She went with Jeanine to hear the Beatles at Met Stadium in 1965. She went golfing with son-in-law Mike and grandson Ben. She was part of a tap-dancing group into her 80s and 90s. She loved the New York Times crossword puzzles.

Just how adventuresome was Jean? One night she traveled with Jeanine to a club in Winona at which Ben was playing. They asked Mike if he wanted to go along. He said no. Maybe he had the good sense to stay home and go to bed early. But not Jean and her daughter. Would you believe these two were out most of the night and finally dragged themselves home at 4:30 in the morning?

Maybe this shouldn't surprise us. Family was incredibly important to Jean. Who cares what time it is? Ben brought great joy and delight, a joy and delight that continued with Lindsey and the girls. It's not easy packing as many things into a life as Jean did, even one lasting 101 years, but she was determined to try.

If you've ever gone hiking in the mountains, you may have come across a wooden shelter known as a lean-to. It's there to protect animals and hikers from sudden storms that might come up.

As I see it, we humans need lean-tos as well. Lanona Lodge was a lean-to for weary travelers. Country school was a lean-to for farm kids needing an education. Libraries were lean-tos for students developing in their fields and for medical personnel needing to stay as sharp as possible.

On the outside, people like Jean can come across as accomplished and independent, not ever needing a helping hand. Then again, there are times when life catches up with all of us. Our bodies get weary, our spirits sag, and our hearts ache with pain. This is especially hard when we have to say goodbye to those we have loved along the way.

No matter how accomplished and independent a person may seem, we have times when we need a lean-to. Our lean-tos can be anyone or anything that brings us a sense of encouragement, a bit of strength to sustain us, a hint of hope beyond ourselves.

Jeanine, you and the family have been a lean-to for your mom, much like she had been a lean-to for you over the years. Thank you for your incredible love and support. Your mom has had encouragement and strength every step of the way.

Truth be told, lean-tos are not permanent shelters. Storms will come and go. Much as we marvel at 101 years, we live with a nagging sense that life goes by far too quickly. We find ourselves longing for more – another week or month or year.

In Psalm 57 the psalmist speaks to our longings: “God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge, in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, until the storms pass by.”

A storm has passed with the death of Jean. We will miss her. There’s an empty place in our hearts. We commend Jean to Almighty God, trusting that God provides a lasting refuge and shelter in every time of trouble. Amen.

Pastor Vern Christopherson  
August 18, 2021