

## Getting to Know Beverly by Diane Engel

A tribute to Beverly is also a tribute to her family. Without my Aunt Eldrice and my mother, Sylvia's efforts to get us all together for occasional reunions when we were young, I would never have known my cousin Beverly.

In a photo taken along a pier at Green Lake, Minnesota, the summer home of our Aunt Connie, teenage Beverly was at one end with my sister Jean, the two oldest cousins, and I was at the other end, about four years old. The six other cousins—Bill, Roger, and Sylvia Hancock, Tom Aaker and his older brother, and Paul and Karen Nelson were all ranged according to age and height, from tallest to shortest, left to right. I have no idea where this photo is, but as I looked at it many times while growing up, I still can see it clearly in my mind's eye.

There was another photo in my mother's album of a string of cousins ambling along a walk in Lincoln Park, a zoo in Chicago. I remember sleeping on an army cot during that visit, so that our guests could use a more comfortable bed. (Ouch!)

In the early 60's, when I was living in Riverside, California, we were reunited when Bill Hancock and Joan were married at her parents' home in Los Angeles. I may have played the classic family Bach piece, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring", as part of the service. Beverly, Bill Hancock, and I had all been provided with excellent piano teachers, and practiced diligently enough to emerge as pianists able to enjoy playing throughout our lives.

A few years later, I married and settled in a town near Boston. Beverly and her family were living in nearby Arlington while Bill was on the Harvard faculty. One Sunday we all enjoyed a mini-reunion there at their home.

In 2008 I flew to Napa Valley to help celebrate my daughter Karen's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. From San Francisco, I called Beverly, who was delighted to hear from me, and invited me to meet her for lunch in Berkeley. We had fun talking and taking a walk together. Recently widowed, like Beverly, I appreciated her sympathetic ear and her wishes that I might find a companion like the friend who was helping fill the lonely hours of her life. She still enjoyed playing the piano a bit, entertaining her friends, and was delighted with the young family that was renting part of her house.

This January I was touched to receive a letter from her in response to my holiday note. She expressed real joy in the news that I had found a dear companion to share my life. It is a tribute to her kindness of spirit and empathetic nature that she could feel so much happiness on my behalf. She seemed contented with her quiet life of reading and living among her own furnishings, with photos of her dear husband Bill, whom she still loved.

I shall always remember her as a kind, modest, and generous spirit, and am grateful for the time we spent together.