

## Lois

She was first **Lois Ann Friend**, then became **Lois Ann Bailey**. **My Lois!** I could not have found a better **partner** in life.

We were introduced by Ann and Dave Majors, on a **young-adult church ski-trip** in 1981. When we met, we immediately enjoyed each other's company, and became "**best friends**." She was smart, practical, and understated. Yes - down deep I hoped Lois could be "**the one**," but I just enjoyed having a good friend to hang out with. We could talk about anything. Now, even after nearly 40 years of marriage, the aspect of us being "**best friends**" was the one that predominated. We both agreed, that our companionship was the ideal foundation for a successful marriage. We **never** had an angry word - we might have had a **quiet moment** or two, **but neither** of us ever spoke a word we might later regret. We truly **enjoyed** sharing our time, experiences, and lives with each other!

Lois and I had an almost **child-like friendship** - absolutely honest, no secrets whatsoever, best of friends, lots of hugs, and as much empathy for each other as we could muster. It was **brutally painful** to see Lois in her decline with no chance of ever improving.

When we met, we had both been working for a few years. I was the nerdy engineer with **no social life** whatsoever; she was the one with all the **social sensibility**. We both had houses - mine in Baltimore County and hers in Garrett County. She had **real furniture** and all the **bits-n-pieces** that make a household work - I had a table, a chair, bowl, spoon, and roughly 3000 pounds of books and electronic equipment. Needless to say, Lois brought a **more refined degree of civility** to our marriage. And, I was **always appreciative**, that she willingly overlooked some of my quirks.

I value all we had. At the top of the list are all our friends, relatives, and co-workers. But I would be remiss if I failed to point out that I am saddened to consider what **could have been** and **what could have yet come to be**. Parkinsons is such a **cruel** debilitating disease!

"**For better or worse**" and "**til death do us part**," spoken during our wedding vows, seemed **so far** into the distant future. **Little did** we know!

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Lois spent many years working for **DPSCS** (that's the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services). While there, she assumed various jobs, finally taking on the position of the Executive Assistant to the Secretary of the department. Lois **loved** that job!

She retired in 2010, then took a **similar position** at Conmed Healthcare as Executive Assistant to the CEO. She **loved that job, too!** She worked for a guy who had an established record of **buying failing businesses**, running them for 2 or 3 years to turn them profitable, and then selling. Lois had an offer to go with him to his next new business, but the **location** of that business was, as of yet, undetermined.

Lois and I discussed the possibilities - it was a difficult decision. Ordinarily, Lois working in some distant city would **not** be our **preferred choice**, but we both saw this as her **capstone job**, an opportunity to travel, use her business skills, and complete her career. She had worked hard all these years, and we both thought it was time to be rewarded, with a unique job opportunity. So, when the CEO departed, Lois chose to **leave with him**.

A 6-month full-time search for a candidate business, yielded a closed deal on a healthcare business in Dallas, Texas.

Lois had a sweet deal working in Dallas, that included a nice salary, housing, car, and airfare home whenever she wanted. Dallas was **so far away**, but we stayed close with phone calls **every night** and flights home **every third weekend**. It was her opportunity of a lifetime. I was **so proud of her!**

A year and a half later, one sector of the business was **sold off**, with the remainder of the business **and Lois** moving to Atlanta. After living in a **Dallas hotel** for the last year and a half, Lois **leased a condo** in a nice location in mid-town Atlanta. It was an incredibly nice place - Lois was a **hard worker**, and she deserved it.

**Unfortunately**, six months after the move to Atlanta, the **CEO died**, the major stockholder assumed control, the business collapsed, and Lois packed up and came home. Lois took on a couple more jobs after that, including a short stint back at **DPSCS**, but by 2019 she **was - done**.

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The **first indication** of Parkinsons was in 2018, when Lois forgot some important event. I was surprised, but at the time I thought little of it. Then, other forgotten items became noticeable.

In April the **following year**, 2019, **our son Zach** suddenly passed away. His death took a **deep toll** on both of us. It also appeared to put the Parkinsons **in high gear**. To say we never got over the loss, is an understatement. Ironically, as Lois's memory waned, I was **almost envious** that she had **diminished memories** of Zach's passing.

Christmas of 2021, we drove to Zoe's house in Madison, Wisconsin - that's a short 17 hour drive. By her own choosing, Lois had already given up driving - she was well aware of her issues. But, she had no problem suffering the 17 hours as my **riding companion** for that trip. So, **we drove**, and talked, watched the scenery, and actually had a **great time** on that trip.

And the same **was true** in June, when we were invited down to Ocean City, to spend a few days with good friends.

But by **this last Christmas** of 2022, none of that was possible. She had **difficulty** sitting still, was **considerably** weaker, and **had lost most** of her ability to speak.

All along the way, Lois was aware the Parkinsons was affecting her judgement and ability to think. At times she was dismayed when she failed to recall something, but **she knew** it was the disease. Without dwelling on the cause, she took her symptoms with the **grace that was characteristic of Lois**.

From mid-December, the progression of the disease was relentlessly downhill. I could see **some trait**, or capability disappear **almost daily**. By last week, she could only sleep.

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As I look around, I am **reminded** of all the things, and people that were influenced by Lois. She **touched everyone around her**, and I notice those positive effects in everything I see.

I feared this time coming, and I thought I had plenty of time to prepare, but it is much more difficult than I could ever imagine. My world revolved around Lois - she was my **faithful anchor** to all that is good, and her **loyal companionship** made me happy. I cannot imagine how it will be without her.

Lois had been **my rudder, my anchor, my rock**. When I needed an honest opinion on something, Lois was there. She had an eye for **style, and truth**. Now, I'm a ship without a rudder.

Lois was a **dedicated Christian**. She had **deep-seated unwavering views** of her place in the universe, **her relationship** with God, with others, and the way people should be treated. She **inspired me** to be a better person.

I am most appreciative of all the friends Lois had. When our work is done, our final day arrives, and we reflect back upon **our lives**, our children, family, and friends may be the only **worldly** things that truly matter.

I am appreciative of **all of you** being here today. It would **make Lois smile**.

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In these final weeks, Lois tired so easily. Each evening, I would take Lois upstairs and put her to bed early. Then I would tell her, "**Nighty-Night, Sweetie-Pie - I'm going to tend to a few chores - when I'm done, I'll come up to join you.**" So now as I say my final goodbye, I'll once again repeat that line, "**Nighty-Night, Sweetie-Pie - I'm going to tend to a few chores - when I'm done, I'll come up to join you.**"