

My Life.....Laura Riskedahl-Hampton

As I begin to write about my life, it's Mother's Day. I was blessed with one of the best Moms who was very wise. She set helpful examples and taught me lessons that will stay with me for all my days.

My father, who died much too young at age 57, was also a very loved role model as I grew up in the 50's and 60's. Clifford understood the stock market and tried to guide me as I bought my first stocks. Both parents grew up during the Depression, didn't go to college, and needed to work extra hard when they were young. Even so, we three Riskedahl kids were given so much to help us prepare for our adult lives.

Important things to Erna and Clifford were education, a good work ethic, and experiences of all kinds. Dad went to Minneapolis and St Paul Minnesota many times to do buying for our store, and we were always part of these journeys. We experienced city life at an early age, and stayed in a downtown hotel, went to nice restaurants, Minnesota baseball games, and the state fair.

When I was only 11 years old, all five of us in our family went to Europe for the entire summer. The primary impetus for the trip was to visit relatives in Norway, where we spent many days being escorted to see all their homes, and to be wined and dined like royalty. Then we toured ten more countries, returned to Norway for sad farewells to family and sailed back to New York.

I guess I had a spirit of adventure, because early on I looked for summer jobs away from home. My most memorable was at Breezy Point Resort in Minnesota, pretty bold for a small-town girl.

Burt and Barbara had already attended Jamestown College (JC) and invited me down to learn my way around and meet their friends. Barbara even got me a date with a college guy to the musical "The King and I". I'm sure I was pretty excited and impressed! I then went back to attend JC in 1966 and loved it, hopefully learning a lot, growing up more and becoming more independent.

As an elementary education major, I found a fourth-grade teaching position back in Minnesota. Burt and Margo lived there then, so again, a sibling helped me navigate a whole new and exciting lifestyle.

After a year, I had the urge to "move on" and applied to and was hired by the American Red Cross (ARC). The job both shocked and no doubt frightened my family somewhat, as it took me to Vietnam to work with the American military during the Vietnam war as a recreation worker.

I probably learned more and got to know more kinds of people through this experience than in my first 21 years of life. It was very much a growing up experience. When I returned in a year I went to Europe with one of my coworkers to hitchhike (very safe then) through 10 countries. Another unbelievable four months.

I arrived back in Tuttle for Christmas and very sadly the passing away of our dear father. I stayed with Mom for about six weeks just to help out and adjust to this shocking news. She however, in her wise way, assured me I must move on, so I got a job with the American Red Cross again and left for Manhattan Kansas. This was a very sad goodbye for Mom and me, and another new adventure for me. I worked in an army hospital again, in recreational therapy, but didn't find it nearly as challenging as my days in Vietnam.

I then returned to school and got a Library Science Degree from Emporia State University in Kansas. I knew I could return to schoolwork but in a more specialized way. My new job as a school librarian was in New Brighton Minnesota.

Two years later I again got the travel bug and was hired by Northwest Airlines as a "stewardess". I did this for 36 years and the highlight was that it brought my sweet loving husband, Bill Hampton, into my life. We were married in 1979 in Bismarck with family and friends there to help us celebrate our wedding and marriage.

We lived in Minneapolis until 1985 and then moved to Fort Lauderdale Florida. In 1991, we bought a summer home in Moultonboro, New Hampshire. Both homes provided countless wonderful adventures, much traveling and happy days together. We both commuted to our airline jobs in New York, Boston, Chicago and Detroit. Bill retired in 1996 and I retired in 2012.

Sadly, Bill was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and Lewy-Body Dementia in 2011 and our lives as we know them changed forever. After selling homes and possessions, we moved back to Minnesota in 2015, 30 years after we'd left. Bill's health continued to decline, and he passed away in October 2016. We never know what our tomorrow will bring.

I then bought a small condominium in St Paul where I now reside. I do love Minnesota and the cities, have done some traveling, and also met a new friend, Phil. We made many travel plans, but of course Covid changed those. We're hoping to start doing that as the pandemic becomes less of a health threat, and now both realize how grateful, thankful and blessed we've been in our lives and feel pretty healthy and ready for even more new adventures. My life has been happy, full of love and family and friend's support, combined with wonderful experiences and travel. `