



DAY 20

She Never Stopped Smiling

Job 8:21: He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.

Many of you knew my sweet, humble little mother, Frances Secaur. She admitted that she had lived a little life, often hindered by unnamed fears. As she was turning 90, Linda and I, along with my brother Steve and his wife Nancy, decided to give her a treat that would expand her world. A lot. Mom was always proud of her Scottish heritage, but we knew little about it. Her mother was Lola McLain, and her uncle, Raymond McLain, was a Disciple minister who founded Lexington Theological Seminary. A little research traced the family name to the Isle of Mull, in the Inner Hebrides just off the west coast of Scotland. The branch of her family was from an inlet off the North Sea called Lochbuie, where a modest castle fort, Castle Moy, still stands.

Mom had never seen the ocean, or even New York City, so Linda and I took her there for two days of easy sightseeing – a carriage ride in Central Park, a boat ride around Manhattan, and a Broadway show, followed by a pedicab ride down Broadway to our hotel, with her sitting on our laps and giving a royal wave to pedestrians along the busy route. Then we met Steve and Nancy at the airport and flew to Edinburgh and a series of Bed and Breakfasts, north to Perth, and then west across the country. Along the way we bought her a Scottish tam and she posed with it at the entrance to Loch Lomond in the western highlands. We keep the framed photo and Mom's tam on our coffee table. She wore that same joyful grin the entire trip – she never stopped smiling.

Mull is a rocky, shrubby island, somewhat, I think, like the Holy Land, with many more sheep than people. We stayed at an inn on the island after seeing the castle, and she was just beaming when she came to breakfast! She saw a figure like Jesus, an actual shepherd with his flock on a rocky slope outside her room. With great joy she recounted how he rapped his staff on a rock to get the flock's attention, and they followed him up and over the hill. Of all that she saw on the trip, that scene of a gentle shepherd and his obedient sheep thrilled her the most. She had always wanted to visit the Holy Land but never did. For her, this little scene came close.

Loving and living God, help us to always appreciate every new experience and see wonder in them all. Amen

– Jon Secaur