

PEGGY SHANK

Member Since 1982

Background:

Birth Date:

December 27, 1944

Place of Birth:

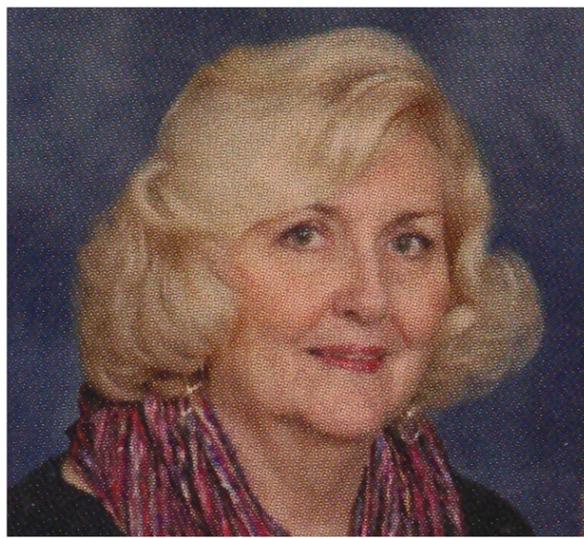
Harrisburg, PA

Did You Know?

Peggy grew up right across from the Carlisle Fairgrounds and desperately wanted a horse to ride there. After much pleading, her parents finally bought her a sorrel-colored horse, with a silver mane and tail, that Peggy named "Lord Handsome."

Favorite Hymn:

Oh, Love That Wilt Not Let
Me Go



"From the moment I was conceived in my biological mother's womb until this very day, the Lord has been with me and guiding me. He opened the door for a wonderful life."

These are amazing words for anyone to speak, but they are made all the more powerful coming from Peggy, who has experienced tremendous tragedy in her life. How can someone who has suffered so much loss, speak such wonderful words of faith?

Peggy was adopted when she was only six days old. While she could dwell on the fact that her mother gave her up, Peggy focuses instead on the fact that she was chosen by her adopted parents, who loved and cherished her. She focuses on the wonder of the random connection made over a card game in Camp Hill, between her adoptive parents and the doctor who would deliver her. When the

doctor first contacted them, Peggy's dad had initially said they would only adopt if the baby was a boy. But after meeting Baby Peggy, her dad changed his mind, and the brief history of her adopted family was set in motion.

Peggy remembers their family being very close and their home being a place of music. Her mother was a church organist and accomplished pianist; her dad was a choir director, piano player, and sought after soloist. Like her parents, Peggy also learned to play the piano, and the family spent their Sunday evenings together, taking turns singing and playing. Sadly, Peggy's adopted mother became gravely ill at a young age, dying when Peggy was only 21 years old. Here again, Peggy sees goodness even in the pain. She says her dad began taking her everywhere with him. She remembers attending his voice lessons and practice sessions, as well as attending worship services at many local churches, where her father would sing solos. Through these experiences, Peggy got to know many older women, who became mentors and role models for her.

Near the end of her life, in a great act of love, Peggy's adopted mother handed over a packet of letters tied in a pink bow. They were correspondence from Peggy's birth mother, who had kept in touch over the years. Peggy's mom encouraged her to make contact with the other woman, "You could look her up, she'd be happy to see and know you." Peggy remembers it feeling as if her mom was trying to provide someone to fill the mother role after her death. But Peggy felt unsure about the relationship. She didn't want to be disloyal to her adopted parents. Peggy vividly recalls her adopted father's response to these fears: "Don't you know that nothing could come between the love we have."

Tragically, Peggy's dad also died just a few short years after her mother. Around the same time, Peggy's first marriage ended. Peggy remembers feeling so alone during this time. She had to leave her young sons, David and Kevin, in the care of a neighbor, while she worked as a secretary and trained to become a real estate agent.

It was through her position at a real estate firm that Peggy met Buzz. She says, "I had been praying all during the Christmas season for God to bring someone into my life. To love me, but more importantly to love my boys and help me raise them." Her firm was having a Christmas party, and Peggy remembers begrudgingly attending, planning to leave immediately after dinner because she didn't want to watch all of the other happy couples dancing. But when the partition was opened for the dance floor, Buzz arrived. He asked to be introduced to Peggy and then asked her for a dance. Peggy remembers answering that she had to get home to her two little children, thinking that would scare Buzz off. His reply: "Don't you have time for just one dance?"

It was the beginning of a beautiful life together. Peggy says Buzz was the most wonderful person to be married to, so kind and loving and easy to get along with. And he was a wonderful father to her boys, as well as Mary Beth, who was born a year after their wedding. Peggy remembers Buzz's encouragement behind her work as a wife and mother, the roles that she feels have been her greatest purpose in life. He also supported her through the process of bringing Elizabeth Elliott to speak at FUMC. Peggy had heard Elliott on a radio program and was strongly impacted by the message. That night Peggy dreamt that Elliott had come to speak at our church. When she told Buzz about the dream the next morning, he said, "Well, what are you going to do about it? It's a good dream, maybe you could make it happen." With Buzz's encouragement, Peggy called Elliott's home. Peggy responded with enthusiasm to Elliott's apology that she was booked for the next two years, "Oh, that's wonderful! We can wait two years. It will take me that long to plan it!" And excitedly to Buzz, after hanging up the phone, "She's going to come in two years!" Nearly 600 people attended the event, and Peggy maintained a personal relationship with Elizabeth throughout the remainder of her life, visiting her home in Massachusetts several times and later attending her funeral.

It is one of the remarkable things about Peggy's story, that she seems to seize the opportunity to express her love to people, whenever she has the chance. No part of her story illustrates this more poignantly than her experience surrounding the death of her oldest son, David. Just weeks before he suffered a massive heart attack, Peggy says she felt the Lord leading her to give David an early birthday present. It was the children's book, *I'll Love You Forever*, inscribed with her words, "This is how much I will always love you." Peggy's response to the Lord's nudge created a moment that she would dearly treasure in the weeks and years to come.

There is a similar story hidden in Peggy's most recent loss, of her beloved Buzz. She expresses her deep regret that Buzz died alone in a nursing home. Yet, although COVID made it impossible for her to be physically present at the end, her love had already been proven over a lifetime—in every meal she cooked, every Williamsburg trip she arranged, and every campaign event she attended. As Buzz's health deteriorated, Peggy's devotion to him never faltered. She rearranged the house so that she could fit her bed in beside Buzz's hospital bed in the dining room, and later she made faithful daily visits to Shook Home after he had to be moved there for nursing care. I'm convinced Buzz knew he was loved.

And so does Peggy. In both her joys and sorrows, blessings and pain, Peggy says she has always known she is in the loving care of the Lord. It explains her advice to the next generation:

"Don't take the journey alone. Take the Lord with you every step. Because He never fails you."