

BETTE RENSHAW

Member since 1971

Background

Birth Date:

January 7, 1944

Place of Birth:

Jacobus, PA

Did You Know?

The town of Jacobus, PA was named after Bette's great-grandfather, Jacob Geiselman. It had originally been named New Paradise, but there was another town by the same name in neighboring Lancaster County, making it confusing for the postal service. Because the other town had been in existence longer, the York Post Master started putting 'Jacob' on the mail instead. The 'us' was added when President Martin Van Buren officially changed the town's name to 'Jacobus.'

Favorite Hymns:

How Great Thou Art

Precious Lord, Take My Hand



Bette was born during the final year of WWII. Within months of her birth, her dad was landing on the beaches of Normandy. While he was overseas, Bette and her mother and brother lived in Jacobus, PA, so that Bette's mom would have the support of her family.

After the war ended and her dad was discharged, Bette's family moved to Lewistown, PA. There her dad got a job in his father's appliance store. But because Bette's mom missed country life, the family soon moved out of Lewistown to neighboring Burnham. Bette has fond memories of her childhood there: of playing with her siblings in the orchard on the property, and of the adventure of using the outhouse and fetching water from the pump in the yard until her dad made updates to modernize their home.

Growing up, Bette had dreams of becoming an airline stewardess, but somewhere along the way her plans changed. After graduating from high school, she attended Shippensburg University, where she earned a degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Library Sciences. Bette then taught 2nd and 4th grade in Chief Logan School District for five years, during which time she earned her Master's Degree. She and several other teachers from her school would carpool to Shippensburg University three evenings a week. They were given permission to leave slightly before the kids in order to make it to their classes on time; they didn't make it back home each night until around 11 o'clock. When the other teachers earned their degree a semester ahead of Bette, she remembers her dad riding along with her so that she wouldn't have to travel to Shippensburg alone.

However, soon Bette would be traveling much further, when she had the opportunity to fly to Hawaii the summer after her fifth year of teaching. By the time she returned, Bette felt like she was ready to move on from her job

in Chief Logan. Although she considered moving to Hawaii or somewhere on the West Coast to teach, she says she kept hearing “Gettysburg” in the back of her mind. She applied and was accepted for a teaching job at Meade Elementary, which is now the Federal Point Hotel.

Soon after Bette began working in Gettysburg, the reading aide in her school set her up on a blind date with Ron, who happened to work with the aide’s husband at the telephone company. She arranged for Bette and Ron to go on a tour of the Gettysburg battlefield together, and then arranged the plans so that Ron would end up having to take Bette home afterward. They had dinner together that night, followed by a whirlwind courtship. Ron and Bette started dating on May 8th, Ron proposed on June 8th, having been encouraged by John Parson, and they were married on August 8th. Their first child, Rebecca, was born two years later, followed by Deborah and Daniel.

Ron and Bette began attending FUMC shortly after they were married, and they have served in many different ways in our church ever since. When their kids were younger, Bette enjoyed helping in the Junior Department and with VBS, where she says she always tried to bring the faith alive for children. One of her favorite memories of this was helping to put on Marketplace 29 A.D., a Vacation Bible School program that helped children to step back in time to experience what life was like when Jesus was alive. More recently, Bette served as the leader of the HOPE Class for 15 years, a role she continues to fill in a limited capacity as the coordinator of the class’s prayer chain. Ron was the original cook for the Thursday Night Dinners. He coordinated the meal on a weekly basis for the first several years of this ministry. During that time, Bette did a lot of behind-the-scenes work to help him. She most especially remembers the times when she helped to peel the 200 pounds of potatoes needed for the Thanksgiving turkey and Christmas ham dinners.

Bette talks about the difficult experience of walking alongside Ron through his death from ALS. In 2012, Ron began to experience a range of symptoms—muscle weakness, a raspy voice, and excessively sad emotions. After going through a battery of tests, he was diagnosed with ALS in April of 2013. Bette remembers singing “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” on a constant repeat in the months following the news. By January, when Ron had to get a feeding tube, Bette had changed her words to “Precious Lord, take his hand.” In the beginning of May 2014, two of Ron and Bette’s children ran the Pittsburgh Marathon, along with their spouses. They joined an ALS team of about 100 people and wore shirts that said “I ran for Dad” and “I ran for Ron” and “I ran for Pop.” When Ron heard the news that the four of them had finished the race, he managed a smile. He passed away later that week.

Bette says that her faith became stronger as she walked along with Ron through his illness. She experienced God’s love and care in many little ways during that time. One day Rev. Don Nolder showed up with a prayer shawl, that Rod Shatzer had fashioned out of repurposed yarn from an unfinished sweater that Bette had donated to the knitting team. It turned out that the yarn she had purchased years before to make a sweater was destined to be her prayer shawl instead. Ron and Bette also received a lot of support from the HOPE class, whose members surrounded them with help, love, and prayer. And when Bette gave a testimony in church after Ron’s passing, she arrived at the lectern to find that the Bible was somehow already open to the verses in Jeremiah 29 that she was planning to read.

Looking back on the twists and turns of her life, Bette says, “God had a plan for me. God has a plan for all of us. We just have to keep our eyes and ears and heart open.” Bette’s advice to others involves four words that she has found to be important in her life journey:

Faith - Your faith has to be strong.

Believe - You have to believe that Jesus is Lord and that He is in control.

Trust - You have to trust that God has a plan for your life.

Hope - If you have faith, belief, and trust, then you will have hope no matter where the journey takes you.