

Eulogy for Ruth Ellen (Dumroese) Heaton – 1 May 2013

Good morning. Thank you for joining us as we remember Ruth. On behalf of all of the family assembled here, and family joining us in spirit from other locales, we appreciate your kind words, hospitality, brownies, and prayers. Although I do a lot of public speaking as part of my job, this is not that. But, I think I can do this this morning, as long as I don't make eye contact with the front row.

My mission this morning is to share with you a bit more about the Ruth we loved, the Ruth we laughed with and laughed at, in the way only loving families do, the edgy Ruth with her nearly purple hair and bright, avant-garde jewelry, the Ruth who loved to count cross stitches and later bead jewelry, the Ruth who loved to travel, the Ruth who loved to decorate her home for every conceivable holiday, the Ruth who didn't like to wear socks, the Ruth, the mother, the wife, the sister, the friend, the Ruth, the fierce bridge and bunco opponent. Many of you may already know some of these stories, these facts, but perhaps not. So I'd like to share some with you. And, later, we'd love to hear some of your stories later as well.

Ruth, Rhoda, and I are Dumroeses. Our tradition is German and seriously, genetically, to-the-bone Lutheran. Our paternal line is pure German. In fact, we originate from a little town named Dumroese, pronounced Doom-rrrose-ah, that, because of World War II, now lies in Poland. Our maternal line is all German too. Great-great grandpa Huber homesteaded in southeastern Indiana in the 1830s and was a charter member of the Lutheran parish at Blue Creek. Great-great-great grandpa Hill was a charter member of the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Freeport, Illinois. So, there, in Freeport, six generations of Lutherans later all three of the Dumroese children were members of that same church and attended Immanuel Lutheran School on Chicago Avenue. Ruth, the eldest, went first. While there, she was an excellent student. She played volleyball and was a cheerleader for the boy's basketball team. The blue and gold Lancers. Fight to win, blue and gold, fight to win! Ruth composed that original school song, which, they might still be singing today. After 8th grade, she moved on to the Freeport Junior and Senior High schools, conveniently located just a block east of our modest home on Empire Street. No doubt it was a bit of a culture shock, going from a small group of students that had grown up together in the Lutheran tradition, many of them related too, now diluted into the vastness of public education. But, Ruth the scholar excelled, despite those funny horned-rimmed glasses that everyone wore in the day. She was editor of the school newspaper, in the top ten of the 450 graduates in the Class of 1969, and was one of the commencement speakers. Not bad for a pretzel. That's right, Ruth was a mighty pretzel, the proud mascot of Freeport High.

Let me back track a bit... As I mentioned, we grew up in Freeport, a small town in the northwest corner of Illinois surrounded by corn fields, a couple hours west of Chicago and about the same nearly due south of Madison, Wisconsin. We lived just a few blocks north of our maternal grandparents, Lee and Mabel Kasten. Ruth and Rhoda were living a grand, carefree life close to loving relatives, enjoying family summer vacations with the extended family to the forests of upper Wisconsin, had a bunch of cousins to play with, and could easily walk to Read Park and the swimming pool. Ruth and Rhoda loved to swim, and they loved to have a root beer popsicle, for fortification of course, for the strenuous, steep, one

block walk, all uphill, home, as only youngsters can imagine. I'm sure that hill isn't much of a hill now. Their utopia ended in 1961 when I was born. Now the 10-year-old Ruth and her 8-year-old sister had me to contend with. As it turned out, I ended up spoiled rotten because I really had 4 mothers.... Our grandmother Mabel, our mother Janet, Ruthie-poo, and Rhod-the-Toad. Ruth and her sister ruled the upstairs, unheated attic of our house, off limits to me, the little Toot. Ruth would toss me, lovingly I'm sure, into the front basket of her bike and tootle me around town, often being mistaken for my real mother. Most likely the destination was our Kasten grandparents, and their huge yard.

Growing up as a family, one of our favorite traditions was the summer camping vacation. Departure was a fully orchestrated event, with every supply having its designated spot, and its placement in time and space a choreographed process. This intricate loading procedure was done by Ruth and her father. At the camp site, the process went in reverse, with Ruth and her father able to set camp in a matter of minutes. Apart from nearly blowing away in the tornado in South Dakota, or being eaten by the bear that wanted to eat the goulash mom was making over the camp fire in the Smokey Mountains, or nearly freezing to death in Pelton, Michigan, most of our family vacation time was spent at Fish Lake in southern Wisconsin, swimming, canoeing, and enjoying time with family and friends. It's a miracle we survived all of that travel in a station wagon without seat belts. And, it's even more a miracle that we endured the matching red and white checked gingham shirts that our mother thought we as family looked so cute in. Yeah, right.

Upon graduation from high school, Ruth was named a prestigious Illinois Scholar and decided to attend Concordia Teachers' College in River Forest, Illinois. Looking back, and reflecting on this the past couple of days, Rhoda and I realize how important it was for our parents to send the three of us on to higher education. At the time, our folks were maybe earning \$1000 a month, and Ruth's tuition alone would be \$850. Fortunately, her state scholarship covered the tuition. While at Concordia, she met Donald Kehres, and in June of 1972 they were married in Freeport with the reception held in the back yard garden of our house. A year later they graduated from Concordia with their Bachelor of Arts degrees in Elementary Education and followed their vocation to Bristol, Connecticut, where they taught in the Lutheran elementary school. A few years later they returned to the Midwest, they lived in Missouri, and they adopted their daughter, Jennifer in 1983.

Time passes, circumstances change, people evolve. Ruth and Donald divorced. During this transition, Ruth discovered that she loved banking and investments. Those were Dumroese genes expressing themselves... her grandfather was a CPA and had that same dark complexion that Ruth enjoyed and the rest of us coveted. By 1992 she had become a business analyst for tax reporting and 401(k) investments with DST Systems in Kansas City, Missouri. During these years Jennifer became a teenager and Max the Beagle howled his way into the family.

In 1993, Ruth married Paul Heaton, surrounded by family and friends at the Made in Heaven Wedding Chapel near Kansas City. The next few years were busy with Jennifer in school, especially with her participation in the marching band. In 1997, opportunity called from sunny Sacramento and the Heaton family moved to Elk Grove. Ruth eventually settled in as an IT Analyst at Los Rios Community College

District. Rhoda and I aren't exactly sure what Ruth really did. I remember reading a paragraph that Ruth had once written about her job, and I thought, of course... Ruth belongs to Mensa so her IQ is obviously higher than mine; what did she just say? Perhaps some of her co-workers can enlighten me later.

Rhoda and I, and the rest of the family, were always so glad that she and Paul had the chance to tromp across the globe. These two great friends and companions looked past each other's foibles and idiosyncrasies, the way many of us try to but with less success, and instead focused on the fun, enjoying multiple trips to Hawaii, touring about California's most famous locales, Alaska, Greece, visiting family in Idaho and Illinois, and most special, celebrating their 20th anniversary this past March on a cruise ship in the Caribbean. Fortunately, it was one of the few cruise ships that, like their marriage, still worked.

Ruth, the mother and grandmother, loved her daughter and her grandkids. Spending time, watching them grow, cherishing smiles, rolling out the photos like all grandmas do.

Ruth loved handwork. Those are probably the Huber genes coming into play, as her grandmother Mabel was an avid crocheter and quilt maker. First for Ruth, it was counted cross stitch. Some of it is up here with her now. A lot of it is hanging in our homes and adorned on our pillowcases. Then, and probably much to the chagrin of Paul, I'm joking Paul, but to the delight of everyone else, Ruth discovered beads. And beading she did. I understand that her beaded jewelry was a staple at church fundraisers. Let me just say this, we have found enough beads in Ruth's office, that if converted to jewelry and raffled away, could fully fund the church for the next century. Beading was probably the most perfect hobby for someone like Ruth who simply loved jewelry. She was an easy one to buy birthday or Christmas presents for... another set of earrings, another bracelet, another necklace. As long as it was bold, colorful, and large, it worked for Ruth. It was Ruth.

Bigger than life, bold, colorful. That was Ruth. Add in a pinch of dry-wit, some well placed, playful sarcasm, a forceful opinion, some left-leaning politics and you start to know Ruth. She seemingly allowed the bad things in life to quickly become distant memories, writing them off with a blunt "Oh well." She was a straight shooter... ask Pastor Carl. On one of his recent visits, as Ruth was having a particularly brutal health day, she simply, sternly said, "I don't feel like conversation." I wonder if she also gave him the "the look", peering over the top of her glasses.... But on the inside, she was, as Paul said, a "gentle soul". She was, like the rest of us, fragile. She had questions of faith. Like all of us, she fought her demons. She fought against the damn German genes from the Kubbernuss side that kept her from her target weight. Despite her being Lutheran from the womb, she sometimes questioned the existence of heaven and hell. She cried at the loss of loved ones and when situations were painful...

But, like the rest of us, she had family and friends that loved her, empowered her, laughed with her, celebrated with her, worshipped on Sunday mornings with her, and today, lovingly remember her. We all have that special memory.

Our family reunions were pretty much always the same. The family around the kitchen table. Telling stories, laughing. Reliving history, laughing. Playfully knocking each other around with a bit of sarcasm,

laughing. Lovingly poking each other with verbal stabs, laughing. Delivering the pun, laughing. Maybe playing some cards, NOT laughing, cards were serious business... always, definitely enjoying the moment. Enjoying each other. Loving each other. Holding each other up: figuratively, prayerfully, physically.

So, gathered here today, we might not really be enjoying the moment, simply because Ruth isn't here, at least physically. But, I can hear Ruth, giving an "Oh well, cancer won" but then, adding, "Not so fast." She knows very well, and we know too, that we will be reunited again in a perfect state with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And that hope moves us out of this room, with Ruth in forever in our hearts and minds. And, we know that Ruth will meet us, no doubt wearing some brightly colored, beaded jewelry, her hair pointy and purplish, with open arms ready for a hug.

Again, on behalf of the family, we thank you, Ruth's extended family, for honoring her with your presence today.

Prepared and presented by Kas Dumroese