

# A Collection of Life Stories for Cathy McArthur





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# What was your Mom like when you were a child?



I would like to tell you what my mom was like when I was a child. This picture will show you my mom and I am on the right and I'm about seven years old and my little sister Marianne is on the left and she's about three years old. My mother was a very beautiful woman and she had some trouble after giving birth to me and she said that she had heart problems with rheumatic fever and she was in bed for many many weeks as I was growing up. I realized that my mother needed a lot of extra help and because of her heart problem she decided that she would live with her father. Her father was a landscape manager of a large estate in Wayne, Pennsylvania and we lived in the landscape gardener's house and it was up on Atlee Road in Wayne, Pennsylvania. So my mother lives there, my grandmother, my grandfather, my father, and my sister Marianne, and me. My mother was definitely the dominant person in our family. She was dominant maybe by making us feel guilty that she was the

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mother and we caused her problems. At any rate we had to do a lot to help her and I remember she had us doing all kinds of chores and we would have to prepare the table every night for dinner we would have to clean up every night after dinner from the kitchen table and bring it to the sink and wash the dishes because back in those days there was no dishwasher and I would wash my sister would dry and then we had chores to do weekly in the house. We had to polish every single one of her knickknacks. She would even have us polish door knobs and we would definitely have to clean our room thoroughly. We really did not have a lot of free time. I think she had charts for what we had to do every week. She was a very popular woman. She belonged to a mothers club in our Catholic grade school in Wayne, Saint Catherine of Siena. I think she was an officer in the mothers club and they would do a lot of money making projects and even go on TV to raise money and so she was very popular and and very very friendly and she's very outgoing so my sister and I learned to do what she wanted done and we passed our youth like that. My father was a wonderful person but, as he was very quiet, she was definitely in control.

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# How did you get your first job?



**M**y first job was at the Woolworth 5 and 10 in Wayne, Pennsylvania. I was 16 years old and a sophomore at Notre Dame de Namur Academy in Villanova, Pennsylvania. I lived in Wayne and saw a “help wanted” sign and applied. They hired me to do cashiering after school, so I got the school bus to drop me off at the store after school. I had a brown pleated skirt as part of my uniform with a cashier’s jacket on top. I worked from 3 to 5 in the afternoon. Afterward, I put on my uniform jacket and walked home to my house on Donna Lane. I continued working after school until the summer and then worked full-time. I was then dating Bill McArthur, who worked Philadelphia Chewing Gum factory. One day he picked me up with a mixture of sweat and powdered sugar all over him. Everyone stared. I enjoyed my first job and stayed on until I graduated from high school in 1959.

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# What is one of your favorite children's stories?



I read the Bobbsy Twins when I was first reading and then, when I got older, I started to like detective stories and read many books about Nancy Drew. I used to walk from Donna Lane to the center of Wayne, where there was a large new library. I would check-out many books from the romantic section. In subsequent years, I was the assistant head of the Circulation Department of the Pattee Library at Penn State. I liked working at libraries so much that I earned a Masters in Library Science degree from Shippensburg University. I returned to the Pattee Library in 1975 to catalogue John O'hara's office that had been a contribution from his estate. During this stint in the library I was also a mother as shown in the photo below (I'm the one without face paint).

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# What was your Dad like when you were a child?

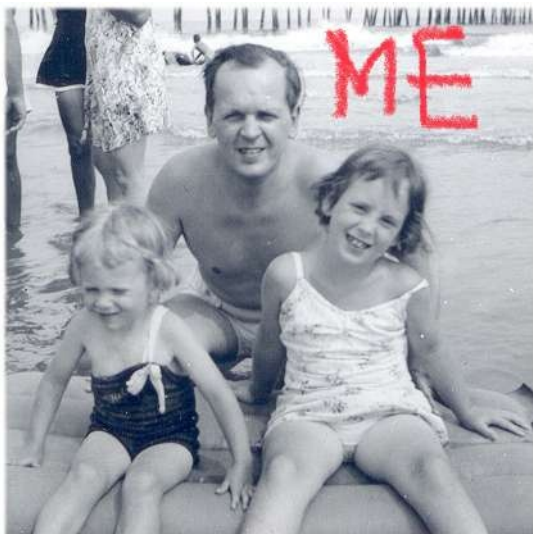


**M**y fathers' name was Alexander Fagan. He moved into my maternal grandparents' house when I was a tiny newborn baby because I was a very cantankerous baby because I had colic and my mother was not able to deal with me very well. She thought that she had rheumatic fever and she was in bed for about six months and actually my grandmother taking care of me helped a lot. This was during the depression. I was born in 1941 and my father was not able to get a job and he became a milkman but what he wanted to do was get a college education so he worked as the milkman in the day and then he went to Wharton school of Penn at night and then received an accounting degree. He was very very studious and was a quiet, kind, caring man. He loved his family very much and once he got his accounting degree he worked for a company that had a lot of mushroom farms in the Philadelphia area which required him to go visit these various mushroom growers and to settle their accounts. He worked very

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hard and traveled a lot with a company car. I remember when I was very little I was in my room supposedly taking a nap in my crib. Instead of napping I was kind of prancing around in my crib and my father came in to see what was going on and I think he picked me up and changed my diaper and then maybe put me back to bed thinking I would go to sleep. I found out later that what he had done that day was go to the Army recruiting office and try to join the Army to fight in World War II. Fortunately for us but unfortunately for him he he did not pass the physical because he had flat feet so he could not join the Army. I remember that day very very well. I also remember that my father was very caring and very loving but he was a very quiet man and he was easily controlled by my mother and unfortunately he only lived to age 46, which is awful. My husband Bill, who fortunately had met and liked my father, and I decided that our first child would be named after my father, either Alexander or Alexandra (which it was). The photo shows my father, my sister Marianne, and I on the beach in Ocean City, NJ.

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# Are you still friends with any of your friends from high school or grade school?



**T**ranscription from an audio conversation:

I presently have two good friends from high school but I'm only going to discuss one with you now and then the other good friend I have I will discuss as a grade school friend. My two good friends are Chris Jones and Sue Keeley who went to high school at Notre Dame de Namur Academy in Villanova on Sproul Road. Sue lived on Louella Avenue in Wayne and Chris lived on Brook Road in Wayne and I lived on Donna Lane in Wayne and so we were known to our classmates as the Wayne crowd. I'm going to talk about Chris Jones as my present high school friend although Sue is too but I'll talk about her when I talk about grade school. Chris Jones and I were good friends and we talked a lot in high

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school and we were especially caught up with the same boyfriend for a while. We went to a girls school so all parties had to be given by the high school girls. Boys came from local high schools to attend these parties. Well, Chris and I both met Bill McArthur who lived in Penn Valley who went to lower Merion high school and we apparently each of us dated him at some point in the early years of high school. When it was time for us to have a 16th birthday party for some reason my mother decided to ask Bill McArthur to host a 16th birthday party with her for me but Bill McArthur had been dating Chris Jones and Chris's mother had first asked Bill to host a party for Chris. I have no idea why they didn't get together into this party for both of us since we were both born on the same day November 4. At any rate Bill had to tell my mother that he was already hosting so I have no idea what my 16th birthday party was like and I didn't go to Chris's so anyway that's how we both got the same boyfriend but as high school went on I really dated Bill much more than Chris and as a matter of fact all Chris met another boy Jim Devine and they got together and were married before long. Bill and I both went to Chris Jones and Jim Devine's wedding at the Inn of the Four Falls in Conshohocken, PA. In fact I was in the wedding so we remain friends even though we had that 16th birthday mixup. At any rate Chris and I had a good time in high school and Bill and I were married soon after Chris and Jim and we actually invited Chris and Jim to come to visit us on our honeymoon we had rented a

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cabin on Lake Wallenpaupack because Bill was going to go on to Penn State for graduate school and I of course was going with him but we had a three weeks before our wedding on August 6 till we were into our apartment in Graduate Circle. Jim and Chris spent the weekend with us at the lake. I'll always remember that and Chris and I still see each other in fact she now lives in Delaware where we lived up until six months ago when we moved to Florida full-time. Now I'm going to talk about my memories from grade school with my friend Sue Keeley. I knew her in high school too: we were the Wayne crowd but in grade school Chris was not in our school. We went to Saint Catherine of Siena in Wayne Pennsylvania and Sue and I always claim that we were best friends since second grade. We are still good friends. I remember Sue had three brothers and she needed another girl so I became her sister. When we were young in grade school she lived in colonial Village and I always visited her. I remember we just did crazy things. I remember they had a sandbox with a big ridge around it and she and I would put on these towels around her our shoulders and pretend we were royalty walking on the edge of the sandbox. I have many memories of that because I probably fell in the sandbox a lot. I also remember going to colonial Village swimming club with them we spent a lot of time there and even when we were young adults. Sue's mother would take me on vacation because Sue only had three brothers and she would ask to have a friend so one vacation I remember very

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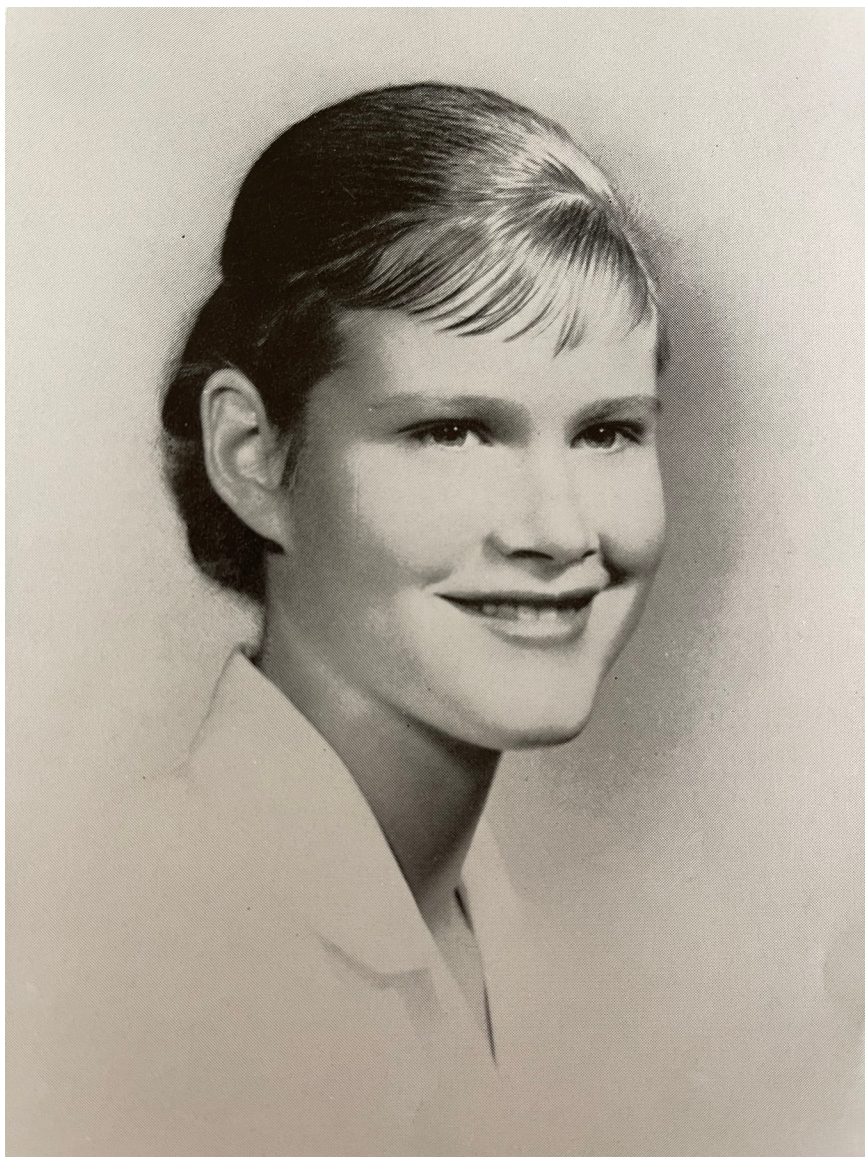
clearly we went to Montauk point and it was Sue's three brothers and Sue and me. It was it was a wonderful experience it's a very exclusive place at the end of Long Island and we loved it very much. I had an acute appendicitis attack, I think it was in fourth grade, and Sue was having a birthday party and I was in the hospital having an appendectomy. I always miss that party. I had looked forward to it so much and I just never made it. Sue and I have spent many years together and I still see her. She goes to Naples and lives in the Boston area and we still keep in touch and see each other often.

The first photo is Chris Jones' high school graduation portrait.

The second is the portrait of Sue Keeley.

The third is my portrait.

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# What is one of your favorite drinks?



**A**s a regimented person, I drink the same favorite drinks every day. In the morning, I start with coffee with coffeemate; at lunch I have an Arnold Palmer; for dinner I have Cabernet; and, before bed I have Sleepytime Tea. Of these four daily drinks, I would have to say that my favorite is my glass of Cabernet.

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# How did you celebrate your 21st Birthday?



**T**he year 1962 was a memorable and very sad year. Memorable since I turned 21 and sad because my dad died of a heart attack. In the summer of 1962, my friends from West Chester and I rented a house in the Gardens of Ocean City. A lot of us worked at Chris' Seafood restaurant at the foot of the 9th street bridge to Somers Point. We didn't have a car, but we had bikes and we bravely rode our bikes through the traffic to our waitress jobs. It was July 11, 1962 and my sister Marianne was staying with us in Ocean City. Our Aunt Kitty arrived at our door in Ocean City and said she had to take us home immediately. She was visibly upset and Marianne and I thought that something horrible had happened to our father, since he was under a doctor's care for his heart. In fact, he had gone to his doctor that afternoon for a EKG, which was normal. Driving home on Lancaster Avenue in Wayne, PA he was stricken and managed to cross the road for a car dealer's lot before he died. He was only 46 years old. It was

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very difficult, but we carried on: Marianne began her senior year in high school and I began my senior year in college. The memorable part of 1962 occurred on November 4th when I turned 21. My Aunt Rosemary, a longtime friend of my Mother's had a house in Longport, NJ, where she spent her summers. She knew it was my 21st Birthday and managed to get tickets for the 500 Club in Atlantic City where Frank Sinatra was the headliner. I couldn't believe I was going to see my favorite star in person. It was a fantastic night and I'll never forget it. I'll never forget that sad and memorable year.

# When did you learn to drive?



In my senior year at West Chester State College, I still didn't know how to drive, even though my future husband Bill tried to teach me how to use a stick shift on his mother's 1952 Plymouth back when I was 17. My friend Carol Dorr drove Sue Keely and I back and forth to college each day. After Christmas of my senior year, my mother bought a new Corvair in which she had a dreadful accident on an icy Old Gulph Road on her way back from shopping. The Corvair had the motor in the rear, so my mother ended up under the front hood of the car. She had to be removed by the EMTs using the Jaws of Life. She was immediately taken to Bryn Mawr Hospital's ICU and spend several months in the hospital. Afterward, she went to Magee rehab center in Philadelphia. My sister Marianne was a senior in high school and also didn't have a driver's license. Luckily, my Uncle Jack and Aunt Marie took us in and drove us where we had to go. Uncle Jack decided that I desperately needed to know how to drive. He

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taught me very patiently and he said that he would take me to my driving test. He found a testing place that didn't require parallel parking and so I got my license. I think that Uncle Jack lent me a car to drive on errands and to visit my mother at Magee. Finally, she recovered enough and came home, but it was a while before she was able to drive or work again. Meanwhile, my Uncle John managed to get me an interview at Plymouth Whitemarsh School District as a ninth grade English teacher. I got the job and bought a car, a Chevy Nova. I taught at PW for three years and received merit pay and the Outstanding Teacher Award. My department chair attended my wedding to Bill in August, 1966. I brought the Nova to the marriage.

The photo is my college graduation picture.

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# How did your parents pick your name?



**M**y mother's name was Catherine Bridget McMenamín and her mother's name was Catherine Gorman. My middle name at baptism was Agnes, named for Agnes McCusker, sister of Father McCusker, an Augustinian priest who both baptized and married me. I also picked up the middle name of Marie when I was confirmed. That name came from my father's sister, Marie. My last name was changed to McArthur when I was married to my husband Bill on August 6, 1966. My official name is Catherine Agnes Marie McArthur.

The first photo shows my mother and me before my wedding. The second photo shows Father McCusker with Bill and our two mothers at the wedding reception.

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