

Love of teaching, love of learning ~ The Storytelling Life of Fredi Ware

A biography by Jean Bartlett (www.bartlettbiographies.com)

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(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)

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In June of 2008, Fredi Ware retired from her Pacifica teaching career. On October 3, 2021, this beloved Pacifica native who was 100% all in as a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, educator, student and friend, bid farewell to her many communities when she passed peacefully in Oakland, California, at the age of 74. As it turns out, on the event of her retirement in 2008, I interviewed Fredi for the *Pacifica Tribune*. It seems only fitting that a story on Fredi should begin with her voice.

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Pacifica School District retiree Fredi Ware reflects on her varied career

By Jean Bartlett

A graduate of San Francisco State University, Ocean Shore eighth grade teacher Fredi Ware grew up in Sharp Park. She recently explained why she sought out an academic career.

"I became a teacher because when I am stuck in a nursing home, I want a lot of people who are good critical thinkers to be voting thoughtfully," Ware said.

Ware has been teaching the eighth graders of Ocean Shore School for the past ten years. Prior to that, she subbed in the LSUSD (Laguna Salada Union School District, now the Pacifica School District) for a year before accepting a job teaching ninth graders English at Oceana High School.

"I just stuck around and ended up teaching freshmen science and algebra for about seven years, give or take a few semesters," Ware said. "I sat up on the hill, with my binoculars, waiting for Connie Tse to get tired of teaching wacky eighth graders at Ocean Shore and then I made my move. I remember making up a discipline plan on the spur of the moment during the interview!" (Connie Tse, in turn, moved her teaching expertise to Ocean Shore's third grade class in 1998.)

When asked if she had received any awards over the years, Ware replied. "I received a speech award when I was in high school and the principal got me the wrong prize. Am I bitter? Wait, I did get a plaque for Academic Council at OHS – with my name misspelled!"

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Ware is delighted by how students surprise her and live up to the challenges she gives them. "When I least expected it, students took on the power to make things happen and I have learned so much from their strength and guts."

Ware loves being a teacher. "All I have to do is putter around in my messy, hazardous classroom with my noisy current students," she said. "Randomly, old graduates, new graduates and in-between graduates will drift in to tell Jan Keaney (seventh grade OS teacher) and me what to do. 'More textbook work,' they say. 'Can I do community service here?' 'I am passing my classes.' 'I hate that wheel essay, but it works.' Former students bring their children in for an introduction. It's all a thrill."

Ware admits she is really going to miss these visits.

She's got some advice for students. "Don't allow teachers to stop you from learning." For new teachers, Ware also has advice. "Stop long enough to listen to your students."

As to her retirement plans, Ware said she is going to have fun with her husband Gary and their family. She also plans to go back to storytelling. "My brochure will be titled, 'Storytelling to the Standards,'" she noted. "Don't laugh! I really mean it. I will only go to schools where I can take public transportation to get there and the first visit is free. After all, they may not like my type of stories."



Frederica Maria (Siebert) Ware was born at Children's Hospital in San Francisco to Robert and Emma (de la Fuente) Siebert on November 21, 1946. Following Fredi's safe passage into the world, she went home with her parents to their Bay Area home at 1077 County Road, Sharp Park. On the coast, just south of San Francisco, Sharp Park was then an unincorporated community of San Mateo County. It is now one of nine small coastal communities (Fairmont, Westview, Pacific Manor, Sharp Park, Fairway Park, Vallemar, Rockaway Beach, Linda Mar and Pedro Point) which incorporated into the City of Pacifica on November 22, 1957. Also waiting to greet Fredi at her home in Sharp Park was her big sister, Andrea Siebert, older by three years.

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"Initially, due to the polio epidemic at that time, I was allowed to approach the bassinet that held my tiny sister with face and hands freshly washed and to peer in at the baby through layers of mosquito netting, while holding my breath," Andrea smiled in recollection. "Supervised by my grandmother and godfather, I looked in again and again, intrigued by her tiny delicate fingers and their immaculate little nails. She wore a hand-embroidered gown and had dark curly hair. I remember standing on the sidewalk in front of Plates Store on what was then County Road. Ann Plate and my mother argued amicably over which of their two little girls was more beautiful. Each protesting that it was the other woman's child. The two big sisters, Marilyn and I were undismayed by the admiration showered on our sibs."

Andrea said her family's home on County Road, which is today's Palmetto Avenue, was on the corner of Carmel Avenue.

"It was a small house," Fredi's big sister continued. "It was meant at first to be a real estate office and weekend getaway for realtor Ray Higgins. The corner lot was a quarter of an acre. Those days the air was fresh and salty. So on sunny afternoons, baby Frederica napped in a buggy under mosquito netting with me standing by as watchdog while my mom gardened. Our immediate neighbor was the firehouse and it was remarkable to me that my infant sister could sleep through the noon whistle."

The Siebert family's other neighbor was Pacifica pioneer Lydia Comerford Fahey. Lydia's three-story Sharp Park home, identified by newspapers at that time at six thousand square feet, sat on 80 acres of land, and was situated where the Mobile Home Park is now on Palmetto Avenue. Born in 1883, as a young woman Lydia was famous for riding her Palomino about the family property with a rifle in her lap, once using it to give railway surveyors pause as they "accidentally" breached the line of her family land in their quest to map the placement of a high-speed, coastal electric railway. Andrea and Fredi's parents were dear friends with their neighbor Lydia, and Andrea and Lydia, despite their decades-age difference, were most definitely kindred spirits. (Link into a biography on Lydia Comerford Fahey [here](#).)



Lydia Comerford-Fahey's Sharp Park home.

As to the Siebert's first home in Sharp Park, Andrea said it was built by Ray Higgins and his friends, and it was "one of those faux half-timbered, stucco houses that stood in the small hopeful developments of the twenties and thirties, attracting attention to houses for sale." Andrea noted you can find several homes like it in San Francisco's Forest Hill neighborhood.

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"Our Siebert house, however, was embellished indoors with two, knotty pine-paneled sunny bedrooms upstairs. Downstairs was a small kitchen and a dining room. From the dining room, you stepped down into the living room and its polished hardwood floors. Those who built it went to a great deal of trouble to make a hearth of cobbles salvaged from some of San Francisco's streets that had been modernized. They built the fireplace itself with very large smooth stones pulled up from the nearby beach. It made a welcoming focal point without dominating the fairly small room."

Fredi and Andrea shared a bedroom. They had cot-sized beds, with steel bands that kept the mattresses firm but springy, Andrea explained.

"They withstood great leaps and landings, even when we were fairly big kids. To our amazement, our parents somehow knew what we were doing. Around 9:00 at night, our dad would call up the stairs. 'Drea, Ricky, are you asleep?' We wouldn't answer. When all was quiet, we would begin jumping up and down again. If we heard him coming upstairs asking the same question, it was my job to turn out the light quickly and Fredi's to snore loudly." After that, sleep arrived.

Andrea and Fredi's parents, Bob and Emma, met in San Francisco in the fall of 1929. Bob, who was born in San Francisco's Mission District in 1907, had just returned home from working as a wiper on a tanker—responsibilities included cleaning the ship's engine spaces and machinery—with Standard Oil of New York. He had left his hometown to earn his last three years of tuition at the University of California, Berkeley.

Emma was Bob's sister Antoinette's best friend as well as Antoinette's boss. Emma was a Mexican national by accident of birth.

"She was born in Mexico because her family, who lived in San Francisco, was staying with relatives during the aftermath of the 1906 quake."

These were Depression times and both Bob and Emma were working hard to help keep their families afloat. Bob finished his degree from Berkeley in 1932 and jumped full-time back into the workforce. In 1936, with a bit more financial stability, the couple married at St. Anne of the Sunset, a Catholic Church on Judah Street in San Francisco.



Bob Siebert



Emma (de la Fuente) Siebert

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In November of 1941, the couple moved from Bob's folk house on 32nd Avenue to their new home in Sharp Park. Bob was working as a master painter for Matson Navigation. It was a good job, Andrea noted, and it allowed her parents to contribute to the support of their family elders.

One month after Bob and Emma moved to Sharp Park, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, decimating the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The day following the attack, the U.S. declared war on the Empire of Japan. Partially deaf in one ear from diving competitions in college, Bob was given a 4F classification.

In 1943, the couple's first child Andrea was born. Several years later, as other families made the move to these growing coastal communities, it became evident that what Sharp Park needed was teachers. As it turns out, Bob had always wanted to be a teacher and, with Emma's encouragement, went back to school and received his teaching credential from San Francisco State University and subsequently his Master's in Education at Stanford University. He began his Pacifica teaching career with fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth graders at Sharp Park's San Pedro School, and would teach in Pacifica for 38 years. (Link into a biography on Bob Siebert [here](#).)

One of the main reasons why Emma and Bob had bought their home in Pacifica, rather than their native San Francisco, was Emma had always wanted a garden around her home and both loved the sea – and this choice most certainly gifted their children with a magical childhood.



"When Fredi and I were little, she and I, and an occasional neighborhood friend or visiting cousin, would play in the wonderland of the yard surrounding our house. My dad might put up an army surplus tent near our sandbox. Next to the workshop he built was the goose run where our big grey goose stayed for safety at night. Fredi had the knack for playing with the goose. We used empty nail kegs to build castles and sailing ships. One of our favorite activities was using a broad board balanced on a large barrel. We each would take turns being pirate captains and made each other walk the plank."

←Fredi, left, and Andrea, right, growing up in Sharp Park.

When the Siebert family lived on Palmetto, their dad would take them to the beach almost every morning, waking them at 4:30 a.m. or 5:00 a.m., because there was so much to see.

"We would both listen to my dad talk about the dwindling sardines and the bass – though Fredi was most engaged when we were running along the beach between winter storms."

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On weekends, during the season, they would fish for crabs.

"We would throw the female crabs and the undersized ones that washed ashore back into the sea – 'So,' as my father would say, 'there would always be enough to share.' We'd collect several large males and my dad and Fredi measured them to be sure they were legal to take and eat. On those occasions, my mom would call our aunt and uncle in San Francisco's Parkside neighborhood and invite them to eat crab. Our San Francisco cousins would walk down the beach from Fleishhacker Pool (gone now, but then next to the San Francisco Zoo at Sloat Boulevard and the Great Highway) to Sharp Park and we would all feast."

Another great memory from their home on County Road was going down the path through a small cut between the cliffs to "Mrs. Fahey's beach." There was also the thrill of running in Mrs. Fahey's attic. In addition, there were the occasions of picking wild mushrooms and strawberries near Mrs. Fahey's property and in the autumn, when one was of age, there was blackberry picking.

"Conventional wisdom was that you needed to have tough skin to climb down into Phil's Gulch to a most prolific berry patch known only to Lydia Fahey and my dad. One had to be at least 9 years old. So Fredi would have been along on my second trip. My dad had painted each of our names on pails with lids. We had to wear the novelty of long slacks to protect us from the thorns on the six foot high brambles. Fredi was game and more agile than I. We made several trips to the creek at the bottom and back up with our pails full of berries. When we got home my mom made jam and pie while Lydia made jelly, and my dad took pictures of the first slice of pie with his new camera."

Who were the Siebert parents?

"My mom was dedicated to family as a whole, to our scholastic success, and to keeping a clean, comfortable, and pretty home," Andrea said. "While our parents split the discipline load, Mom was the disciplinarian. My dad was always a teacher, the kindly listener-advisor, excited to show us the world and the earth."

"One morning after a January storm, Dad, Fredi and I were on the beach. He was telling Fredi and me about the Japan current, and how sometimes floats made of glass came all the way from Japan and landed on our shores. Immediately, Fredi, who was always running ahead of us, discovered an amber globe twice the size of a softball. It was covered with tow netting. In a moment we found a second one and it was a morning we never forgot."

"As an adult, Fredi was the most balanced of the Siebert daughters between the two types of people my parents were – powerfully expressive and determined and practical like our mom, and patient, idealist and educative like our dad."

Andrea suddenly burst into laughter as a "so essentially Fredi story" popped into her head.

"When Fredi was 18 months old, the family was walking in light sun-showers down the middle of County Road. There were no sidewalks then. We were coming home from a visit to Mrs. Fahey's. Fredi was running ahead in her brand new patent leather 'Roman' sandals. Just past Plate's Store was a large puddle. She stopped, looked back at the three of us and then waded right into it laughing all the way. I was astounded by my parents' reaction. They looked at each other open-mouthed and said, 'Well, isn't she something!'"

"I never walked the same picket lines with her nor even attended the same peace marches, but I think she really was 'something,' no matter what she dared!"

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Because their father taught at their local public school, the Siebert family was told their daughters would have to attend elementary school elsewhere. So, as each daughter entered school age, they were enrolled at École Notre Dame des Victoires in San Francisco.

"Our parents joked that if they were going to pay both taxes and tuition, we should get the added benefit of learning French."



The Siebert children did learn French, but they did not learn Spanish. In the latter case, their mom was both fluent and literate in Spanish, but, Andrea explained, she never used it in public or encouraged her children to learn it.

← Fredi, school photo, École Notre Dame des Victoires, circa 1956.

"My mother had lived through the Mexican Repatriation. She and her family experienced a great deal of discrimination from their childhood on and so my mother was protective, both by experience and nature."

The sister that was best at speaking French was not Andrea, nor Fredi – it was their little sister Ramona. Ramona came along when Fredi was in second grade.

"I was 10 years old and felt privileged to sing my little sister to sleep and even to change her and get her ready for bed," Andrea said smiling. "Fredi had no such enthusiasm for taking care of 'baby,' as she was barely seven. Her fondness for Ramona aged like a good wine. We were all quite

close as teens and adults. We went out with our mother for birthday celebrations four times a year."

The Sieberts did not have a television in their home.

"Our parents wanted to be sure we paid attention to our studies and summer's extracurricular activities," Andrea reminisced, "like going to the beach, playing games, visiting relatives. Both of our parents' families were large and celebrated holidays and birthdays endlessly. After school in San Francisco, we went to an aunt's home so we did get some television time there after homework. But Fredi was happier out on the street, 32nd Avenue at Vicente, with all the kids that played there."

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Bob and Emma Siebert's three girls: Fredi, Ramona and Andrea, circa, 1957.

In the summer, the Siebert girls helped their dad set up his summer school classes in natural history.

"He borrowed taxidermied animals of every sort from Coyote Point's collection. My mom would confiscate our library books and make us go out into nature, especially in the unusual event of a sunny day. The sun always blazed forth in September the week that school opened."

The family moved to San Mateo Avenue, today's Paloma Avenue, just past where Oceana High School is now. It was there Fredi became a "leader of kids."

"Fredi would take troops of Gavins, Picolottis and Dominguezes up into the hills to slide down the crowning little hill we all knew as the 'knoll,' on packing-crate cardboard. They would also have snail fights in the chrysanthemum or cabbage beds depending on the season. These were tended by our neighbor Mr. Dominguez."

Like her sister Andrea, Fredi attended St. Rose Academy, an all-girls college preparatory Catholic high school in San Francisco. "Ramona argued successfully and was the only one allowed to attend Oceana High School in Pacifica."

"Fredi always excelled in school and was a straight-A student," Andrea noted, "especially in high school. She was also actively involved in the elaborate dramas staged at Riordan High School (then, an all-boys Catholic high school). She starred in a Riordan production of 'My Fair Lady' as Henry Higgins' mother."

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The family did not take many vacations. There was too much to do in the immediate world around them. At home, their dad played the concertina, which Fredi would also learn, and when pressured, their mom would sit down to the piano. There was also a great sweep of classical and pop music on the home record player, along with Irving Berlin, Johnny Mathis, Louis Armstrong and many others. The family always read a lot, recited poetry, and talked a great deal about what they believed and didn't believe. And Andrea recalled that when Fredi turned 10, she left behind her "are we there yet?" phase and became great at telling stories and singing when the family traveled by car on their way to a camping expedition.

"Fredi loved tunes from musicals. She also favored folk and country songs that were more heritage than trendy. And she kept up with her concertina, even very late in her life."

Fredi's high school experience was good, filled with learning and many friends, and she, like her sisters, thrived, always, on the political and educational conversations at the home dinner table.

"The conversations were assorted and animated," Andrea laughed. "We would all argue and put in our two cents. Perhaps the proscriptions against violence or profanity developed our satirical wits and vocabularies. Among the families, Sieberts and de la Fuentes both, children's opinions were heard and respected as well as adults. One Siebert extended family member characterized that group as being their own best friends. I believe that was true."

Each Siebert daughter was taught to be an independent thinker.

"That is absolutely true," Andrea said. "My dad was a more conservative democrat and Fredi was more a liberal democrat. Fredi and I and my mom were rabid about civil rights. Religion, current events and almost anything else was open territory for opinion and discussion."



For most of Fredi's high school years, Andrea was away in college. She doesn't recall any special dates or boyfriends in Fredi's life, but she does know that Fredi's favorite high school dance memory was the father-daughter dance at St. Rose Academy.

←Fredi and her dad at the father-daughter dance, Fredi's second year of high school.

Following her graduation from St. Rose Academy, Fredi headed off to San Mateo College where she studied Latino issues. She also went to work for Pacifica's Parks, Beaches & Recreation Department.

"I met Fredi when I started working for Pacifica's PB&R in 1964," said Penny (West) Keating. (Penny is known for her profound work with the local environment. She is also a member of Pacifica's celebrated surfing family. Like Fredi, she is a native Pacifican.)

"Fredi and I were both playground leaders and just seemed to naturally come together with our love for kids and our like-minded interest in nature and a future in teaching. We both enjoyed the new intern, Ginny (Silva) Jaquith and formed long friendships with her."

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Penny's future husband, Dick Keating, had never liked school much but he had liked one teacher, Fredi's dad Bob Siebert.

"Mr. Siebert understood how much Dick loved the ocean," Penny said. "So he often put problems of math or science in terms of ocean situations. It made a big difference in Dick's interest and Mr. Siebert's daughter Fredi had that same wonderful teaching quality of reaching students on their own personal interest level."

Penny isn't exactly sure of when a young man named Garrett (Gary) Dobson Ware began working for the PB&R, but she does remember that there was always a lot of laughter between the four of them, Fredi, Gary, Ginny and Penny. It was just one of those great job/life experiences.

Fredi's sister Andrea credits Ginny Jaquith for introducing Fredi to her future husband. Ginny, who moved to Pacifica in her senior year at San Jose State University to do that internship—and never left—would go on to serve as PB&R Senior Recreation Leader followed by Director of Parks, Beaches and Recreation, and would also add Pacifica Mayor and City Councilmember to her résumé, before retiring as Professor, San Francisco State University.

"Am I responsible for Fredi meeting Gary?" Ginny pondered. "Probably. About 1968, I changed positions and Gary was hired to take my place as the Senior Recreation Leader in charge of teen programs. He was a talented and gregarious guy who ran the high school teen dances at Oddstad Park and worked with the Teen Council. As I recall, Fredi worked the dances as a chaperone and, while I may have introduced them, the relationship took off from there without any other involvement from me!"

At this point in time, Fredi was attending SFSU studying sociology, while also co-renting an apartment in San Francisco's Laurel Heights neighborhood with her sister Andrea and several other friends. (Andrea, who is an educator, writer and artist, was working then as a teacher at San Francisco's Children's Center.) While Fredi worked her way through college, Ginny hired her as a preschool teacher. And it was those very same reasons that made Fredi such a good PB&R employee – that later would make her such an excellent high school and eighth grade teacher. Ginny explained.

"Fredi was quirky, creative and talented working with preschoolers, and older kids as well, and they loved her. She was always challenging them in a fun way and related to them easily. She also worked well with the other PB&R staff members and made some wonderful friendships with other staff members during the time she worked for the department. They were a great team!"

"I remember when Fredi directed what was truly a child-friendly, pre-school drop-in, in the Fairmont neighborhood for PB&R," her sister Andrea said. "She noticed that the most delightful part of the day for them, and her, was when all the little people sat around with her peeling Elmer's Glue off their fingers, each one speaking random thoughts and listening to each other."

Was teaching something Fredi had wanted to do since she was a kid?

"She wanted to write and then decided to be a teacher, 'like Bob!'" Andrea noted. "He had, as she did, focused his college studies on social institutions."

What about her fellow PB&R employee, Gary? Did the sisters discuss him?

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"We had conversations always about the kinds of men we met and when Fredi spoke about Gary, it was in an assessing tone," Andrea recalled. "She was deciding carefully what she could and couldn't bring to marriage with him and what it would mean to her."

Where did the couple go on their first date?

"Family lore is that their first date was a tour of the PG&E Power Plant," Fredi and Gary's daughter Monica Ware said. "You could say there was a spark between them!"



Fredi Siebert and Gary Ware's engagement photo, 1968.

Monica weighed in on why her parents were such a good match.

"They were both pretty goofy and silly – that's the easiest way to explain it. Also, they were aligned with their values and had a similar approach to raising their kids.

"I think for my dad, who was born with one hand, he often felt like people saw his handicap as a limiting factor and he was always determined to prove them wrong. My mom never saw it as a limitation and never saw it as defining him in any way. I'm sure he appreciated her way of accepting and appreciating others for being their authentic selves; she didn't dwell on what others perceived him to be lacking."

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Gary and Fredi on their wedding day, February 1, 1969. They married at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Pacifica.

Andrea also discussed what made her sister and brother-in-law such a good match.

"It's always a singular magic of some sort that makes a marriage work. Theirs included creative brilliance, ability to work constructively with others, complementary senses of humor, and love of each other and their children."

The couple rented an apartment at first and when Gary got a job in Santa Cruz they moved. The first two of their four children – Nick, Monica, Justin and Donovan – were born in Santa Cruz.

"Fredi and several other mothers in Santa Cruz started a rotating childcare arrangement where each family took care of all the children once a week," Andrea noted. "This gave the parents ample free time, and the children social and play events, with minimal financial burden. Gary was a recreation center director and Fredi and Gary were active in their church and made some lifelong friends that way."

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Fredi and her son Nick, Santa Cruz, CA, 1970.

Monica reflected on her mom's personality.

"She was a scientist at heart, a true observer of the world who always wanted to know how things worked," Monica began. "She had a gift for seeing people for who they were and for accepting them as they were. She never pushed someone to be anything other than themselves."

"She had a way of walking into a room of kids and finding the one who had gone unseen, unnoticed, and maybe unappreciated," Monica continued. "She could bring out something in the shyest and most socially awkward kid. She didn't mind talking about 'touchy' subjects, especially with her students. She always challenged us and her students to work it out, and talk about things that might be a bit uncomfortable."

Monica noted that her mom was always more focused on substance than style.

"Outward appearances didn't matter much to her; the quality of one's character mattered more. And she cared deeply about so many things – politics, social justice, equal rights, access to education, the environment, family, friends, etc., etc. She taught us the importance of leaving the world a better place than when you found it, whether that was cleaning up your campsite thoroughly, or taking action for positive social change. And she taught us to understand the consequences of our actions, whether it was

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the impact we had on the physical world, or the impact our words and deeds had on others. She was also deeply silly and loved dark humor and bad puns like Bobby." (Maternal grandparents Bob and Emma were lovingly known by their grandchildren as Bobby and Emmy.)

The family moved back to Pacifica. Monica said that Pacifica had always been home for her mom and raising her children there made sense to her.

"She loved being near the ocean as did we."

Fredi's parents were very much part of her children's lives.



"We saw them several times a week, usually, and frequently had family dinners and celebrated holidays together," Monica recalled. "In high school, I would go up at lunchtime to visit them and I think my younger brothers may have done that as well. Bobby taught all the grandchildren to play chess. Emmy taught me cross-stitching, played endless card games, and indulged my childhood interest in dollhouses by building her own grand dollhouse. I have vivid memories of going with them to Hippo Burger on Van Ness and Louie's out at Land's End in San Francisco. I also remember going with them to the San Francisco Symphony and Preservation Hall Jazz Band concerts at Stern Grove. 'Sweet Emma and Her Preservation Hall Jazz Band' was a favorite record in their home."

←Family elders Bob and Emma Siebert—pictured here in their Pacifica home, circa 1971, with their daughters Ramona, Fredi and Andrea— were always a "good place to be" with all their descendants and relatives.

Fredi and Gary's kids all went to Pacifica's Alternative School when it shared space, first at Vallemar Elementary and then at Cabrillo. (The Alternative School is now Ocean Shore Elementary and it is located in the Pacific Manor neighborhood on Oceana Blvd. It is where Fredi would eventually retire from.)

"Fredi and I both had our children enrolled in the Alternative School," Penny said. "It was great to renew our friendship and enjoy each other's children. We were both very active parents and spent a lot of time at the school. She was very much involved with two of the projects near and dear to my heart – the Oceans Week Program, and the Salmon and Trout Program. The Oceans Week Program continues on and we did the Salmon and Trout Program for a couple of years until releasing the tiny fry in San Pedro Creek posed problems."

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What exactly is the Alternative School/Ocean Shore? The school was founded on the premise that a partnership between parents and educators, allows for an enriched, experiential education through hands-on learning, special projects, small group instruction and frequent field trips for students. Penny Keating created Oceans Week. Oceans Week, now Oceans411, takes place yearly in May. Multi-awarded, Oceans Week was founded to teach the school's K-8 students about marine environments in a hands-on way – to learn about the ocean that they live next to. It follows the adage we protect what we know. Classes take place all over the school and there are daily rotations to Linda Mar Beach.

One of Monica's favorite stories on her mom, there are many, might be called, "Fredi Versus the Whale."

"She spearheaded the effort to relocate and bury the carcass of a whale that had washed up on the beach, in order to preserve it for later display at the school," Monica said. "She was a get-it-done kind of person, and in spite of all the odds and challenges, she made it happen."

"A gray whale had washed up on Sharp Park Beach and Fredi was, most definitely, the key person involved with getting possession of it," Penny, still obviously impressed, noted. "It was quite an operation to get the whale body to Shamrock Ranch where it was buried to separate the flesh from the bones. It was a year or two later when we were encouraged to dig it up. I think the Shamrock residents were beginning to grow weary of the developing 'aroma' emanating from that piece of land. This seemed a perfect specimen and activity for the upcoming Oceans Week. There was quite a group digging the whale up and finding—smelling the stench of—the whale's bones with flesh not yet completely decomposed. I don't remember where the bones went to finish drying out, but eventually they did dry out and were put back together and placed at the old Alternative School (when it shared a site with the former Sharp Park School). It was a beautiful symbol of a school with a huge dedication to environmental education and preservation.

"Fredi was so talented in so many ways," Penny went on to say about her friend, "and really threw herself wholeheartedly into so many projects at the school. She was an especially gifted storyteller and always had animated stories to share which everyone enjoyed fully, whether in small groups or full assemblies and especially around the campfire – and there were lots of camping opportunities in the Alternative School."

Monica shared a favorite "Fredi and her family" story.

"Fredi left the Catholic church when we were kids and took us, instead, to work in the soup kitchen at St. Martin de Porres House of Hospitality in San Francisco on Sundays. We learned more about charity, humility, empathy, and humanity there than anywhere else. My dad would frequently stop at farmers' stands on the way home and he came home once with a giant bag of snap peas. We ate them at the dinner table and Fredi initiated an all-out, full-scale snap pea shell battle, which had us hurtling snap pea shells at each other all over the house."

This led to the subject of whether Fredi was secretly a "star chef" in the kitchen. Monica laughed.

"My mom was a 'cook' by necessity, but was not a fan of cooking. Her cooking was, in fact, pretty awful, by her own admission. She made something we called 'tofu balls.' They were fried blobs of tofu with chopped veggies that we would drench in ketchup to make them tolerable. Fredi was notoriously into what we called 'health food' back then. Until I was about 4, I thought carob was chocolate and our favorite special treat was the carob peanuts from The Amused Carrot (a former cooperative grocery store in Pacifica). Our favorite dishes she cooked were a homemade spaghetti sauce and 'chicken in the chips'—chicken rolled in BBQ potato chips—that were my grandmother Emma's recipes. She would make what

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she called 'cobbler,' which was Bisquick dough sprinkled with a bit of cinnamon and slopped on top of canned peaches; it was truly gross. Her horrible cooking was the inspiration for me and my brothers to develop our own cooking skills, as well as an appreciation for delicious, well-prepared food. She had many talents, but cooking was not one of them!"

Fredi, both by nature and as an educator, was very environmentally and ecology minded. She raised her children to be equally thoughtful.

"When we were kids, we always carried a little garbage bag with us on our walks and we would pick up trash everywhere we went and put it in the bag," Monica said. "We recycled religiously and every week we made a deposit at the recycling center in Pacifica. My dad rigged up a hose to the washing machine so the gray water from our laundry would water the lawn, and he bought biodegradable detergent. My mom was very much a child of the 'waste-not want-not' generation. She shopped at the co-op, our clothes were almost exclusively second-hand, and she bought most food in bulk to minimize waste and packaging. At the time, it wasn't a political thing. It was just the right thing to do. It's an awareness and sensitivity that we are all still guided by in our own lives."

As a parent, Monica said her mom was always pushing her children to question things, to never settle for the obvious. "She had a way of making connections and recalling things she'd read that she could relate to whatever topic we brought her way."

As to being a part of the land, as was so much a part of Fredi's childhood, Ware family vacations were always backpacking.

"We backpacked throughout the Sierras every summer," Monica noted. "We would usually go in for a week or more, and my dad would often take us off-trail, navigating with his topographical map. Planning for these trips was epic – just getting the food weighed, put in containers, etc., was a huge ordeal. There were a few harrowing moments on those trips, getting caught in a snowstorm, for instance, but they were transformative and greatly influenced us all. There is something irreplaceable about experiencing the natural world away from every other human being: seeing the wild world above the treeline, diving in freezing cold glacial lakes, watching shooting stars in a perfectly clear sky. My parents both loved the outdoors, and those trips, while they did cause some grumbling when we had a particularly grueling hike, formed our sense of independence, self-reliance, and appreciation for the beauty and power of the natural world. Of course, we were also really excited the year we had to hike out after a snowstorm and spent the night in a fairly cruddy hotel with a TV in Reno. For us, though, that was pretty fancy stuff."

"Beyond backpacking, we would go skiing every winter and we always seemed to be working on fixing my dad's endless stream of crappy cars, as well as sourcing, chopping, hauling, and stacking firewood. Our house was solely heated by a wood-burning stove until my parents installed a wall heater, conveniently after I left for college!

"We didn't have a TV, so our entertainment in the evenings was often games, reading, cards, watching slide shows from our backpacking trips, playing music, or listening to radio plays on KQED, like we were living in the 1940s. Our favorite babysitter would bring over her own portable TV when she watched us."

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Monica, Gary, Donovan, Fredi, Justin and Nick on a Ware family vacation, circa 1980.

Along with attending the Alternative School, all four of Fredi and Gary's children went to Oceana High School.

"My youngest brothers were there when Fredi was teaching at Oceana, but neither had her as a teacher. She frequently worked as a teacher's aide at the Alternative School, so she was often around or in our classrooms in grade school."

When her children were older, Fredi went back to school and received her teaching credential from SFSU.

In 1991, Fredi was teaching freshmen science and algebra at Oceana High School. 1991 was the year that the high school restructured from a comprehensive school to a small school with an alternative college preparatory program. In 1993, math and art teacher Greg Peters joined the Oceana staff and the two educators bonded over a like-minded educational core and came to enjoy the great privilege of a friendship that was deep and abiding. Greg, for many years now and continuing, is the Executive Director of SF-CESS (San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools.)

Greg talked about Fredi and the restructuring effort at Oceana High School.

"When I first joined OHS as a math and art teacher, Fredi and I had an amazing opportunity, funded by the Noyce Foundation, to work with other colleagues on an integrated math class. In hindsight, we were ahead of our time in developing and delivering project-based math curriculum that not only was integrated with other core subjects, but also was assessed based on students demonstrating mastery of outcomes rather than achieving a certain percentage of points. Our students, mostly starting the year below grade level, progressed to be competitive with their peers in future, grade appropriate math classes.

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"I recall so many breakthrough moments as a result of our curricular and pedagogical approach, including one in which a student cried after getting a 'B' on her first assessment. Worried that she was upset at not getting an 'A,' I reassured her of the opportunity to revisit before she clarified that it was the first math assignment that she passed. I was confused as I explained that it was the first math assignment that was given. She clarified that it was the first math assignment that she passed – ever. Years later, Fredi and I got a message from her as she shared that she was graduating college – with a concentration in math!"



Fredi – always at the helm or on deck for her students.

An Annenberg Math-Science Fellow, Greg was on board with the San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools when it launched in 2005. Fredi joined the SF-CCESS team in 2005 as an equity coach.

"As part of her impact, Fredi supported an Oakland high school to start a peer observation program in which teachers made their practice more public to each other in order to improve their results with their least-reached students."

And always important to the two friends and educators was their Sunday coffee.

"Ever since I moved to the Bay Area over 20 years ago, Fredi was my first best friend. She welcomed me into her family and she and I met for a majority of the Sunday mornings during that time to talk, laugh, write, engage with random children and parents, and support each other. A favorite memory, of many, is the Sunday after Fredi had attended a weeklong seminar with SF-CCESS focused on interrupting inequities by interrogating our own biases – individually and collectively. The seminar is intense and intended to shift the very way we see the world. That Sunday, Fredi walked into Peet's Coffee where I was sitting and coldly dropped a manila folder on the table. She said, 'Thanks a lot!' I was a little worried given her demeanor as I opened the folder to find a bunch of Sunday comics. When asked what she was

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referencing, she simply and wryly said, 'You even ruined these for me!' And she proceeded to illuminate patterns of inequity based on gender, race, age, etc. even in her previously soothing comics. While only half-joking in her commentary, she was making the point that once seeing the world through new eyes, she could not go back. And in the true Fredi sense of ever openness and curiosity and learning, she never did.

"Fredi was and is a very special life force."

* * *

In 2001, Morgen Underhill was one of Fredi's eighth grade students at the Alternative School. He is also Andrea's son and Fredi's nephew. How was it to be a student in his aunt's classroom?

"Very much like any other teacher in terms of that teacher/student relationship," Morgen remarked. "But Fredi was rather a unique teacher so very unlike any other teacher in the same way that any of her other students would have described it.

"She did not have the conflict of made-up rules. A lot of people approach kids with the assumption that somehow there is some difference between a child and an adult, other than how long they've been around, and she never really had that going on. You talked to her about something, she'd listen to it and she'd consider it. If it needed rebutting, she rebutted it.

"There was a 'feel' she cultivated in her classroom – a different feelingness of all of her lesson plans. She was doing monthly Socratic seminars and the lesson plans were really designed to be engaging. It was not a style of learning, in most cases. She was incorporating styles of learning we hadn't previously been given in the more rote education system.

"I think honestly, a lot of her students, and myself among them, owe many of our critical thinking skills to her. She really did insist that not only did you come up with the answer yourself, but you know how you got there, and you know why a similar sounding answer or thought wouldn't actually be the same thing – and would in fact not work, but it would sound almost the same. She would always have you reconsider and make sure that you had the correct interpretation and an understanding of why you had the correct interpretation."

An Ocean Shore eighth grader in 2007, Elsa Mayrand recalled her former teacher.

"I remember Fredi being awesome and fun! She would sometimes make us scrambled eggs for breakfast."

Among Elsa's top eighth grade memories is the Fredi-supervised, NatureBridge-run, five-day field trip in Yosemite. A team-building, hiking nature experience with a study focus on earth science and geology, watersheds, life science and ecology – the hands-on adventure not only builds confidence, but it helps to ignite a lifelong interest in earth stewardship.

It begins in the summertime with practice hikes. Students, weighed down with heavy backpacks, make local climbs – which for Fredi's students included: Mori Point, Mussel Rock and the Montara Mountain Trail in San Pedro Valley Park. In September, the eighth graders head off to Yosemite National Park where accommodations are several nights in Curry Village in tent-cabins, and two nights out on the trail in a tent, which they share with a fellow student. Classmates are divided into groups and the different groups may tackle different elevations.

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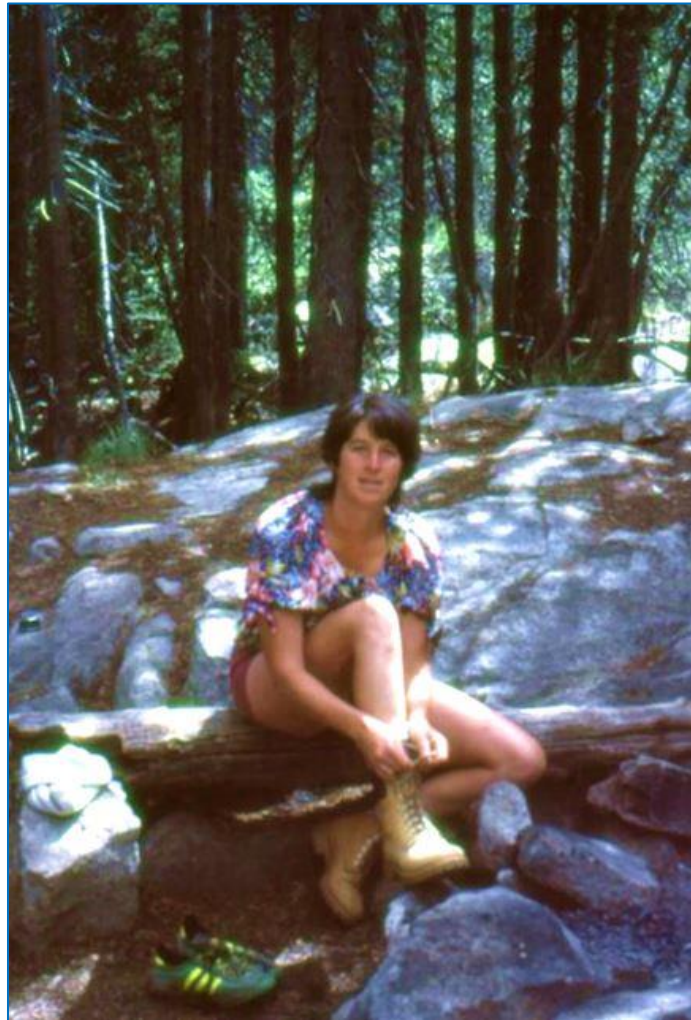
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"We went to Lower Cathedral Lake in Yosemite and stayed two nights next to the lake in the group tents that we brought," Elsa said. "It was beautiful. And I remember hiking up a peak." The eighth grader hikes spanned anywhere from elevations of 5,000 to 10,000 feet.

Elsa suffered some altitude sickness following the day's trail climb to the peak, and threw-up in her tent that night, including, most unwantedly, on her tent-mate's clothes. Elsa recalled that Fredi was right there.

"She was very kind to me and cleaned it up," Elsa smiled. "I thought that was very sweet."



Before she was a teacher, before she was a parent, Fredi was a steward for the earth.

Joane Azevedo-Luesse attended the Alternative School. In the early eighties, when Joane was either a seventh or eighth grader, a "Fredi" story took place that is still close to Joane's heart. A parent at the school at that time, Fredi was teaching Joane, and a group of her classmates, a class on iambic pentameter.

"We sat in a circle outside the classroom, and frankly, the lesson skyrocketed over my head," Joane recalled. "I could not understand the assignment. I knew we were to write a poem that rhymed, so I did. My poem expressed some animosity for my classmates. I had been in the throes of depression, and saw

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myself as a victim of bullying. Things were so bad I rhymed, 'I hate you all' with 'shopping mall.' I did not pull off an 'ABAB' rhyme scheme, or whichever line combination it should have been. I can't remember who sat next to Fredi, but they interrupted me as I read it aloud, declaring, 'That's not how you're supposed to ...'

"I have never forgotten seeing Fredi reach out and place her hand on that kid's arm, saying, 'Let her finish.'

"It didn't matter that I did not do the assignment correctly. What mattered to her was that regardless of how raw or ugly or childish it was, I expressed myself."

Along with having Fredi as his eighth grade teacher, Morgen, who still "very much" misses his aunt, was able to totally enjoy the perks of having Fredi as family.

"She was always quite silly," he laughed in pure appreciation.

He discussed the Ware family's annual celebration of Twelfth Night, a tradition which began with the Siebert parents. But what is Twelfth Night?

Epiphany, or The Feast of the Three Kings, is a Christian feast day celebrated each year on the 12th day after Christmas. Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night," is an allusion to this Christian night of festivity, filled with confusion, discoveries, joy, and silliness – and in the case of the Ware family, add in individual performances.

"We used to do Twelfth Night at my grandparents' house every year on Paloma," Morgen related. "We would do little skits and stuff. I'm pretty sure that Fredi was regularly one of the most inventive. She was always just a consummate storyteller. Her narratives were so engaging and she was always looking for new ways to express the story or whatever it was she was talking about. She might have an accordion, or any number of things she had incorporated into her life over its course, and in turn, was always trying to incorporate it back into, 'How can I communicate things?'"

Morgen's cousin Monica concurred that Twelfth Night was a standout.

"My grandmother had long ago concocted an elaborate origin story involving the three kings visiting their house and leaving presents in a picnic basket on the front porch. On Epiphany, in addition to everyone getting a little gift in the three kings' basket, each family performed a skit or song. These were often rather elaborate and my mom was usually heavily involved creatively."

Morgen noted that because of the family's Mexican and Irish Catholic heritage there is another favorite tradition, cascarones. Very common throughout Mexico, cascarones are similar to Easter eggs.

"You save up all the eggshells from everything that you have cooked with eggs throughout the year," Morgen said. "You have to crack them just so, so that the end is off but the shell remains. As Easter approached, Fredi would have us hand paint and dye the eggs, then put a small amount of confetti in each egg, and some watered-down glue that you have these tissue paper circles in, and you slap them over the end of the egg and let them dry."

There are often hundreds of eggs, Monica noted, but they are not put to use until after a traditional Easter egg hunt for the youngest family members. Hosted at the Ware family household, this remains a family tradition to this day.

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"When it's time for the cascarones, everyone gets together in the backyard," Morgen continued, "and we have this big egg fight, where people are hitting each over the head with these eggs. It is so much fun! Along with cascarones, and an appreciation for jokes about Catholicism, which we also do on Twelfth Night, these are our family traditions!"

"Fredi was the heart and soul of the Easter gathering," Monica said, "and her presence is particularly felt and missed at this celebration."

And everyone loved it when the three aunts/sisters got together.

"The sisters had a way of telling a story simultaneously that was always fun to watch," Monica said, "each one interspersing their comments, disagreements, clarifications, and observations – weaving the strands of their story together into one cacophonous whole. There were always lots of stories, songs and general silliness!"



Always close, the three sisters – Ramona, Fredi and Andrea – enjoy a family event, circa 1986.

Fredi was quite simply, as recognized by every interviewee in this story, full of life and full of talent.

In her early adult years she studied clowning with professional teachers. She played the harmonica and the concertina, the latter handed down from her dad. As an eighth grade teacher, she would take her students on overnight trips on the C.A. Thayer – an 1895-built, wooden-hulled, three-masted schooner, now preserved at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. Then, she would lead her students in rousing sea shanties.

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"She had an endless supply of goofy, ridiculous songs," her daughter Monica noted, "often ones taught to her by Bobby. And she loved musicals. Most of the records I remember listening to as a kid were the soundtracks from the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein, Sondheim, and Lerner and Loewe musicals."

And Fredi wasn't the only Ware parent who could swing it out on an instrument. Her husband Gary played the cornet, baritone horn, ukulele and guitar.

"At the old Alternative School, we would sing Christmas carols every year at Vallemar," Monica said, "and Fredi and Gary always brought along their instruments to accompany the carolers. All of us kids were encouraged to play an instrument. Nick played the trumpet, I played the clarinet, Justin took up drums and Donovan played piano. Our little family band would perform at family gatherings at my grandparents' house."



Gary and Fredi, pictured here in 2012, had a love of music in common all the many years of their marriage.

Monica went on to say that her mom – who was a big fan of authors Oliver Sacks, Mark Twain, Jack London and e e cummings, as well as "trashy Harlequin romance" novels – was also a talented calligraphy artist, occasionally doing hand lettering and design work for a local business.

"She also collected beach glass for years – back when beach glass was something you could find," Monica noted, "and made a mosaic out of the glass pieces on a window at the front of our house. Of course, over the years, with my brothers and I constantly slamming the front door open and closed, pieces were always falling off until, eventually, it didn't resemble much! She additionally had a knack for creating elaborate Halloween costumes for us with little or no money. She helped us make everything from a tube of toothpaste, to a backhoe, to a parrot, to a headless Anne Boleyn and more. She had a way with cardboard and duct tape."

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Then there was her storytelling.

"Fredi picked up her love of storytelling from Bobby, who was known to spin a good yarn," Monica said. "As a teacher, telling a good story is a valuable skill, and it came naturally to her. There was a group of storytellers who would meet at Florey's Bookstore in Pacifica and she was an active participant."

In addition to teaching, telling stories, making art, playing music and singing, from 1987 to about 2000, Fredi served on the board of Pacificans Care.

Pacificans Care is an "all-volunteer, community-based nonprofit organization created to support core social service organizations in Pacifica. Pacificans Care ensures that our neighbors in need succeed in developing a healthy, self-sufficient, and improved quality of life."

Ginny Jaquith, who currently serves as President of Pacificans Care, has been on the nonprofit's board since 1996.

"Fredi's father Bob was one of the founders of Pacificans Care and Fredi followed in his footsteps and served on the board from 1987 to 2000. She served as President from about 1994 to 2000. She was active in the annual Share of Care Drive and created a memorial fund in honor of her dad. She certainly helped mold Pacificans Care into what it is today." (To learn about Pacificans Care, link to their website [here](#).)

There is so much missed about Fredi.

"She was in awe of the world, and drew so much joy from being in nature, exploring the world with us as kids and with her grandkids," Monica smiled. "She had a way of seeing and appreciating even the smallest details. It's similar to the gift she had for seeing people as they were, noticing without judging their own little quirks and idiosyncrasies.

"She talked to kids like they were people – even babies. She took kids seriously and they were always drawn to her because of it. She valued their thoughts and opinions just as much as the wisest and most accomplished adult in the room. Watching her interact with our kids and other children was always so fun."

And Fredi was the great encourager – to her students, to her friends, to her children.

"We were all encouraged to pursue our interests and to make our own decisions – to a degree, of course, there were some decisions that we were not left to make on our own," Monica said. "At times, other people questioned her approach to raising us. Some of them later acknowledged they were misguided not only in offering their unsolicited criticism to her, but in their judgment of her parenting philosophy."

Like her father, education was important to Fredi but in its broader sense.

"Fredi really valued informed intellectual discourse, inquisitiveness and creative thinking," Monica said. "To her, it didn't matter what grades you got; what mattered was what you actually learned and the opportunities education afforded you. She was also quite practical about it. Culturally, our kids often hear about the importance of 'pursuing your dreams.' Her take was, pursue your dreams, but also make sure you can pay your bills."

What did Fredi and Gary's children grow up to be? Full-family participants, active in their communities, thinkers. In addition, Nick, with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and a master's degree in

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biology, worked as a process development engineer. Monica, in marketing and communications and a freelance consultant now, worked for the AIDS Memorial Quilt and then at Stern Grove Festival for 20 years. Justin is a mechanical engineer. Donovan works in supply chain management. Monica and Justin also made Fredi and Gary grandparents. Monica's children are Violet and Daphne, and Justin's kids are Tatsuya and Toshiki.



Gary and Fredi at their daughter Monica's wedding in 2008.

Fredi and Gary and their children lost their son/big brother Nick on September 16, 2004 to multiple myeloma.

"Fredi and Gary quietly and privately supported each other," Fredi's sister Andrea said. "She did continue teaching after his death and I think that was part of the 'how' she got through it."

Andrea pondered the so many "wonderful things" about Fredi that she misses.

"As pre-school children we lived not far from an aunt and uncle, and their two girls. They lived on Pacific Avenue in Sharp Park. Before Fredi and the younger girl were born, my mom and I walked to visit with them every day. The older daughter there was my cousin Beth. After Fredi was born, my aunt and uncle and their daughters moved to San Francisco. And as I think about my sister in this interview, I realize that Beth and Frederica are probably the two most important friends in my life – simply by reason of having grown together through that impressive postwar and preadolescent time, all my memories and many of my decisions about life have been discussed with these two girls and the women they became, more than with any other people I have ever known.

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"So what I miss about Fredi is everything. Only Beth and my son have something of her uncanny ability to advise me unerringly about what I need to do next. And I seem always in need of their advice. Fredi was kindly, tolerant, and generous in her support of me throughout my life, even when she was imprisoned in an inarticulate land of brain deterioration that threatened to separate us."

But after Fredi's retirement and before health issues, Fredi did do that storytelling.

"Whenever there was something to be learned, she could tell a story so deftly that you didn't feel you were being taught," Andrea said, clearly awed. "She worked in Contra Costa County schools designing stories to fit curricula. She confided that there was always a learning component for the teacher folded into the process."



Ramona, Fredi and Andrea, 2008, in complete agreement with these immortal words of Irving Berlin, "Sisters, sisters – there were never such devoted sisters!"

Fredi's family feels strongly that the final years of her life were just as important as the rest.

"Two of her colleagues, Jan Keaney and Greg Peters, and her former student Joane Azevedo-Luesse, visited her in the memory care residence where she lived in Oakland until her death," Andrea said. "These visits were painful in some ways for all concerned, but also compassionate and respectful of who she remained – a powerful soul who helped us. During that time Fredi developed strong and affectionate relationships, especially with one of the recreational directors and one of the interns. Both people understood who she was and related to her with pleasure and recognition. Of course her family visited too. I was grateful beyond measure for the constant loving responsibility of my niece Monica and her

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husband Jon Schnitter – as well as for the ingenious ways Monica's daughters found to love their grandmother."

"Fredi had frontotemporal dementia," Monica said. "It's a less-frequently diagnosed type of dementia that can impact people as young as in their 30s. It really affected her language and speech mostly, and she was aware of the changes taking place, which was incredibly difficult for her to face. The last few years of her life, particularly with COVID, were really challenging and heartbreaking, to say the least. Through it all, her Fredi-ness was still there, but she couldn't communicate in ways people could understand, which was very hard for her. She always had something to say, and was very animated and expressive, even if nobody could understand exactly what she was saying. And she would light up with joy when she heard live music and saw her grandchildren, and when spending time outdoors, even at the very end."

"Her dramatic abilities helped in small measure to let her express herself a bit," Andrea said. "So we could sometimes find ways through her isolating labyrinth to understand each other emotionally, if not verbally."

Also very hard on Fredi, was Gary's death on August 27, 2018, even more so because they both lived in separate places at that point in time.

* * *

One of the constant places where Fredi's family thinks of her and smiles is the ocean.

"Fredi loved the ocean," Monica said. "It was her playground growing up and she always lived close to it, or where she could see it, even up in the Berkeley Hills." (Fredi and Gary moved to Berkeley after Gary's mom died, primarily because Gary thought his health would improve with the warmer weather.)

"We grew up a few blocks from the ocean too," Monica continued, "and we never grew tired of trudging down there to sit on the beach or run in the waves. Before my mom's physical condition deteriorated and COVID started, I took her with my daughter and a young friend to Half Moon Bay to the beach. It was the last time she saw the ocean. She and the girls combed the beach for shells, wandered among the tide pools, exclaiming over their findings. And in the little cove where we were, we actually saw a whale. It was amazing to see it so close, and she was so pleased and delighted.

"When we scattered her ashes in the San Francisco Bay, we stopped just near the Golden Gate Bridge and a few dolphins swam past us. I'd never seen them in the Bay before. It was a fitting send-off for a girl who grew up with salt water in her veins and sand perpetually under her fingernails."

Andrea considered what her sister would think about the politics in today's world.

"One afternoon she returned from teaching with her dear friend Greg and exclaimed, 'Is that what this country is really about then? The color of one's skin!' 'Yes.' I said. 'How else are you going to keep a pecking order in place that easily defies justice?'

"I know well what she would think about almost every aspect of the earth and of the human world, and that every thought she might have would be tempered by her tremendous faith in the human ability to learn and grow."

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As to what Fredi might say about a biography being written about her, Monica had an answer.

"She'd say, 'Why are you wasting your time writing about me?'" Monica laughed. "'Go and write your own story!'"



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

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