

Tribute to Barbara Crane

We received an email from Tomás Yeomans in Chile notifying us that Barbara died. I was deeply saddened. She and John were so good to us the years we worked together in Chile. We didn't agree with them on some things (we were the new school and they the old), but we felt they loved us in spite of it and didn't judge us. I guess they helped provide a parent roll model which our own parents couldn't. They acted as surrogate grandparents to our kids and demonstrated patience with them when we didn't. They had us over to supper many Saturday nights and played games with us. They took us on trips and were very caring, generous-hearted people.

Barbara was a gracious hostess and wonderful cook not only making delicious meals for people to enjoy, but serving them with style and creativity on her lovely family china. For one mission meeting she prepared a Chinese-themed dinner and decorations. Once when I made a special raspberry sherbet and was about to serve it during a mission meeting, she cautioned me to serve it afterwards "for people won't focus on the dessert and know how good it is if their minds are on business." Our son Andy remembers that Barbara whistled while she worked in the kitchen.

She was always active, used to being in the thick of things as an eager participant. When she moved to Assisted Living she told me she didn't want to lose contact with people making interesting conversation. She didn't want to miss out on anything and I don't recall hearing her complain about any number of things she could have fussed about, such as feeding more people, or hosting more house guests. John couldn't have had a more able or suitable partner in his work. She loved her family and was always proud to tell about each member. She tried to teach us to play the complicated game of Mahjong using a lovely set of ivory pieces from the Far East which a relative had given her.

At John and Barbara's house we discovered an old songbook which probably had been hers as a child. We learned to sing "Twenty Froggies Went to School" with our children which is a silly song that became part of our family. Our daughter Rachel and husband David have a three-year old son Rutger. We were delighted to hear that David learned the words to many of the stanzas and sings it to Rutger. Sometimes it is the only thing that will calm him.

I'm glad we could visit Barbara at Quarryville last summer as well as the summer before.

It was a bit weird hearing about Barbara's death from someone in Chile rather than someone in the U.S. The Internet has made the world small and so connected that it surprises me sometimes. Hearing from a pastor in the church John and Barbara founded demonstrates the impact they had on the world. A translation of part of Tomás' email is "Last night in the Prayer Meeting for the World we gave thanks for the missionaries that God has used in our beloved National Presbyterian Church." I'm glad we were permitted to work with Barbara and John who showed love to our family and to God's family in Chile. What a treasure and example that was! We loved them both and were enriched by knowing them. They were special people indeed.

Sarah Lambert
Chattanooga, June 16, 2006