

## DELLA JOHNSON EULOGY

By Penny Kirchner, Niece

Good Morning,

I'm not able to be with you today, but my name is Penny and I'm Della's niece. My mother, Gloria, is Della's younger sister, and she would love to be here if she could, but her health does not permit. So I'll tell you that she loved Della deeply and looked up to her, appropriately, since Della was 6 years older, and treasured her as the dearest, best sister that she could have ever hoped for.

When I think of Della, her "presence" is the first thing that comes to mind. If she had grown up today, I believe she would have been a social media "Influencer." She was a large personality whose presence filled the room. She added dimension and personality to every family gathering. How she appeared mattered to her. To me she seemed glamorous, somewhat like a movie star. On many occasions when we visited I sat on the bed and watched as she tried on outfit after outfit, shoes and accessories included, and paraded them down an imaginary runway in her own private fashion show. I always amusedly enjoyed the show and offered feedback on her selections. In the early years she mentioned that people sometimes told her she looked like Princess Grace Kelley, and it tickled her. She did have a bit of "entertainer" in her, and my mother often related that "young Della" would often tap-dance in the family farmhouse, pretending to be Shirley Temple.

Della loved to celebrate occasions both big and small. She didn't want to miss a party or special event for her family or friends. That's because she truly loved people and was a genuine extrovert. She savored every one of her birthdays over the years, and since I lived miles away and was not a part of many of her celebrations, she recapped each one for me, accounting for who sent cards, gave gifts, took her out to lunch or invited her to dinner, what she and they wore and ate, how she knew them, and on and on. I loved that she was a "talker" and a letter-writer and detailed storyteller because it conveyed her deep love for the people in her life and for me.

Della loved to shop and give thoughtful gifts and cards. She expressed her love through them. When I was a teenager she gave me a travel-sized pink satin jewelry pouch with a gold drawstring and I still use it every time I travel, and when I do it reminds me of her. A couple years ago she sent my then 2-year-old granddaughter, Olivia, a musical doll from her own collection and Olivia likes to play with it and gives it a position of honor on her bookcase. Since Della never had the opportunity to meet Olivia, it's a way they are connected.

When I became a mother, I marveled at how comfortable Della was with my son, Josh, and daughter, Jennifer. She got down on the floor to play with them as she had done with me. She was a natural with children, possibly because she stayed young at heart--and in voice. She sounded as youthful at age 95 as when I was 5.

Della held a deep faith in God and a love for Jesus which served as the foundation for her life and the well-spring for loving our family wholeheartedly—her husband Ronald, her parents, sister, brother, sister-in-law and my brother and I and our families. That's what means the most to me on a personal level. I could feel her love. I'll love her and hear that sweet voice and miss her as long as I have life. Then, I have every assurance I'll see her perfected in heaven, at the biggest party either of us has ever attended. And it will be beautiful and will go on and on and on.