

MY BIG SIS

We say hellos and good-byes more than most
As around this country we go
We're two rebels on our separate journeys
More in common than we know

Our first good-bye was the day
you left for college
With hidden tears I faced my fears
Is this the price for knowledge?
My big sister, my babysitter,
My substitute mom was leaving home
Making my memories even more precious
The best hide-n-seek witch of Emmett Place
The leader of the 247 front steps choir
A strawberry shortcake from Fischel's Bakery
A trip to Palisades Park
The Snow Fairy in The Nutcracker
Treasure Island with host John Bartholomew Tucker
The boardwalk at the Jersey shore
Each memory made special by you

Your college years spent in Columbus, Ohio
Made quite an impression
And Ohio State would become my new home
Seven years later a new connection
So good-bye New Jersey and hello Midwest
A transition made easier by you
You were always there for me
Once again my big sis came through

The first to get married
And when times were tough
I became a man with a shoulder to lend
My big sis is no longer just a big sister
Now she's a big sister and a friend

Then a third one came to attend the university
Three single Porro's were together again
Never to be alone in our adversity
We would share our success, joy and pain
But one had to leave this comfortable nest
To chase an old dream now new
With new golden floor mats he headed out West
Where success is for but a few
The good-bye that day was the hardest thus far
A farewell to my two best friends
With tears in my eyes I pulled away in my car
On each other we no longer depend

A calling was soon heard also by you
One few would understand
For those who don't follow their heart
Their spirit never expands
I applaud the bold choices in life you have made
To help those less fortunate than you
God is helping in this honorable crusade
Where success is for but a few

And the single Porro's once again unite
But this time only with two
California is where we now call home
The place where dreams come true
Hello once again to my big sis
On each other again we can depend
Because I'm not just you're little brother
I'm a little brother and a friend

And though we say hellos and good-byes
more than most
As around this country we go
We're two rebels on our separate journeys
More in common than we know.

Mark S Porro 1992



Laurel Ann 0 - 50

On August 31, 1950 at 4:09 pm this Earth was blessed with the arrival of Laurel Ann Porro. You are fifty years young. The number one child of Noel and Genevieve, the sister of five, the Aunt of eleven, the teacher of hundreds and the friend and inspiration to many.

You were a nightowl – never wanted to go to bed. Dr. Chris Reilly told me to put you to bed and just let you cry until dozing off. Well, I tried that. You cried for over two hours. I couldn't bear it any longer and gave up. You were hysterical, red-faced and drenched. I changed your clothes and calmed you down and eventually you dozed off. What a relief! But you still remained nightowl.



A half century of memories proved they were too much for a book, so for Lolo we have created a Memory Box to celebrate you and how you have touched us all.

You were visiting our neighbor, Myrt, one afternoon. Guess you were three or four. Seeing me in the driveway, you called out "Mommy, guess what, Myrt is showing me how to wash dishes!" How happy you were.

Laurel has always had endless energy playing with my kids. She is by far the best Aunt Laurel around.

I have always looked up to Lo for her independence and drive. She is a very strong Christian woman and I admire that so much....love you Lo Lo



Laurel drove all the way to Dayton and back in one day for a reunion with me when I was visiting my best friend for a week.

I remember Laurel Telling Dad she didn't want as many gifts one Christmas. She wanted to give something to the poor. I was mad at her - I wanted the gifts!

I had bought you a cute, fluffy pink, small teddy bear. How you loved it and took it with you always. You'd rub its ear under your nose and be comforted. It was so worn out and Grandma Po just had to crochet a new body for it, but no one could tell what it was - we called it "The Thing." One Saturday, you and I stopped in Woolworths for some refreshment, placing your "Thing" on the shelf under the counter. Nearing closing time we left and went home. After reaching home, you realized you left the bear on the shelf. I immediately

One night in November you were awake, sitting on the edge of my bed with me. It was midnight and I was pooped, but you were wide awake. Then - whoosh - my water broke. Daddy had to rush me to Valley where - in less than a half hour - your brother, Michael, was born.



called the store asking them to look for the toy. Fortunately it was still there - thank goodness - it was after five pm and I asked them to stay open until I came for "The Thing." They obliged so our weekend was saved and a little girl was thankful and pleased. She never would have slept over that weekend without her comfort toy. I believe you still have it put away in your treasures.

We went to the Jersey Shore every summer and you told me to lie about my age so you wouldn't have to pay for me. You told the guard I was 9 and then the guard asked me my age, I was proud to say that I was "11". You were so embarrassed that you had to say, "I didn't know you were that old!" You were also so mad at me.

50 years! 50 years! Can you believe it? And we're still here working through our life on this earth. Well, actually it's not quite 50 for me, only 48.75, but I can imagine what 50 will be like. You've set a fine example of how to be there for others. It's great comfort knowing that we can rely on you when really needed. Yes, this is better than investments in gold. You know what I mean better than anyone else who may read this cause you know that I never put much faith in that investment.

Laurel had an awakening during a family dinner. I don't remember what the discussion was, but suddenly she realized that Grandma Po was her father's mother. We all were very pleased she made this discovery without any help from us.



When we were at the other house and you hid something in the grass. I was trying to find it, but Zak ate it.

I remember you use to work with inner city kids and we went to the zoo or some kind of park. You had me buddy up and hold hands with another little girl and told me not to let her out of my sight. While we were looking at a water fountain she wouldn't hold my hand anymore and then she wandered away. You yelled at me, but I didn't know what else to do. I felt so guilty and felt I let you down. I think that was the last time I let you drag me into your ministry...ha ha.

We love having you be a part of our family any time and every year. Please visit often!!!



I remember eating pomegranates with Laurel in the upstairs bathroom. Not only could we hide, so we didn't have to share, but it was easy clean up when we sprayed the red fruit everywhere.

You talk about making a cook-book about the things you can do with leftovers. Okay, you're 50 now. It's time...start the project in your spare time...ha ha.

When Laurel worked at Fishels' Bakery, the workers were allowed to bring a baked good home. We loved their Strawberry Shortcake. One day Mom and Dad got a call telling of Laurel being fired because they thought she deliberately put aside the cake for us instead of trying to sell it. I remember feeling sad for her and believing her side of the story.



On day in the Summer, Laurel took us all to Palisades Park and gave us money to play the games in the arcade. I remember I won five silver cigarette lighters with one quarter. I gave one to Bill Towe. Did you ever get one?

Even tho she doesn't think she's very patient - I really appreciate her patience with my many faults and foibles. I have been truly blessed to have such a good roomie!

Laurel is a very generous person. She uses her visits to our home to play with the kids or help with dinner and clean up. She has “the gift of helps” for sure.



Since Laurel had a good job, she came up with a lot of good gift ideas. I remember all six of us getting up early and sneaking out of the house to have our portrait done for Mom and Dad's Anniversary. Mom was so pleased and blessed by that.

One of her fancy prom dates, her underarms had a terrible rash on them. They were so raw, she could hardly put her arms down. I think her gown was mint green, with a white embroidered top and a little jacket to match.

Laurel always takes time out to help others, she spends so much time helping out with the Smith's, she worked at a pregnancy center and at a teen center, has gone to Mexico and Panama. She has been teaching children in and out of school to live for Christ and have high self-esteem all of her life... that's amazing.



On one of her prom dates, she came home crying from the beauty parlor. They put her hair piled high on her head. She couldn't stand it. She ran home, washed it, set it, sat under the beauty shop style hair dryer and went to the dance with it down in a little flip. She looked beautiful.

When Laurel was a baby Christian, she was home visiting. She had just seen an Amy Grant concert and was singing and dancing around telling me how cool Amy was. Dad was in the corner chair by the windows reading the paper, and as she came dancing around swinging her hips and thrusting everything she owned, I not only remember Daddy's eyes looking above his glasses, but hoping the verse in the Bible that says "He who began a good work in you, will complete it" was true!

You gave me a neat book, Space for God, for my 48th birthday. It was one of the books I had on my list to pick up one day and you gave it to me without even knowing about my list. I love the book, but I love the fact that you were thoughtful and intuitive enough to get it for me before I could find it myself. Somehow I think you got the impression that I didn't appreciate this gift. I think this resulted from one of my rantings that I don't need anyone to preach their values to me. I'm so sorry about that. Know that I love the book and your gift.

She was supposed to stay over night at Grandma's house. But someone forgot to pack her Teddy Bear, and she would not stay without it. It got so worn out that Grandma had to make a new cover for the bear and embroider new eyes, nose and mouth.



There's a job out here finishing painting Dave & Kathy's house if you're interested. The pays not so hot, but the food is great and the dogs are fun company.

I'm still waiting round for the Rapture. It's sort of like a stock market crash for me. Everyone's sort of waiting for it so we can start the whole thing over again. Clean slate. Fresh start. New beginnings. Spring does it for me. I think this seasonal fresh start is God's plan. Lot easier for Our Creator too: it's a lot of work to make an entire universe again. But I do run around in my Nikes every once and a while. Just in case.

I remember laurel teaching us cute little exercise songs like "toe-knee chestnut, nose I love him, toe, knee, nose, toe, knee, nose..."



Hey, has anyone seen my dragon's foot?

You, David and I swam from our house to the lodge in Canada. It must have been over a mile. My fingers and toes hurt so much after that.

I remember her jumping right in the water with us and teaching us all sorts of pool games like "murder in the dark", as well as playing on the dragon in the ocean just this past vacation in Manasquan, New Jersey. I think that is so cool. I want to be like that when I get older.

I associate Laurel with being very healthy, positive, and full of energy. She would always be doing floor exercises before she went to bed, making us protein shakes, and now sending us vitamins. She's always very smiley and seems like she's never in a bad mood. That's so awesome... and a great witness.

One of my greatest joys is that I have an older sister who knows the Lord and loves Him!



Kathy DeFiori says "Hello" and asked if you would put a good word into the Pope for her since he seems in the mood to beatify saints lately. See what you can do. His email is JP11@pope.net

Laurel and I had a discussion about what grade I was in prior to my First Confession. In the booth I forgot my lines and the very understanding Priest began scolding me and asking how old I was. I told him what grade I thought I was in and what grade my sister said I was in. It only added more confusion to my frightening experience. From that point on whenever I had to go the confession, I had to pee! I'm sure the outside light was flashing on and off as I rocked back and forth inside.

Hey, these memory boxes can be fun! You never know!

Laurel can always be counted on for getting the birthday cards out and on-time. And hey, Laurel I have an idea: lets all get older! You go first!



I also appreciate her goofy sense of humor. One of my favorite memories of Laurel is when she met my new niece-in-law with "Billy Bob Teeth", swimming goggles & cap and her bathing suit on over other clothes. She can be such a kook! She does know how to use comic relief. One day after she visited the Missionary Baptist church across the street - she came back singing their crazy songs off key at the top of her voice and laughing at their many efforts to win over this new potential convert.

Laurel was always there when I we<None>aw himself in the mirror.

You have so much energy playing with the kids and teaching them about your Savior. They loved to listen to you, even it seems they don't always cooperate.

You invited us to Columbus for Thanksgiving when Deecy was pregnant with Brennan. We bought car that weekend. You didn't even tell us how crazy we were.



I remember the nickname you gave Owen: Little O, Little O, Little O; and the song you made up: Wake up Little O, Little O, Little O; Wake up Little O, Little O; Wake up Little O, Little O, Little O; Wake up Little O, Little O. Do you remember the tune?

You would always go on walks with me and Zak.

I remember big sister coming out to Michigan to check out this "guy" when your little sister said "this is it"! You showed me how protective you all were, but you were really nice to me.

You have a gift of giving, not only to your family, but to others in need. I admire that quality in so you so much.

I'm also surprised that Laurel has stayed at this job for so long! Hang in there, kid. God is using your talents.

Every Holiday and Birthday you can always on Laurel remembering it with a well chosen card.

I love the pomegranates you bring over in the Fall, especially the peeled ones.

I'm surprised that Laurel seems to always know what my kids are up to. How do you do it, Laurel?



One time, when I was probably about six or seven, Laurel came to visit and each night before we three girls went to bed she would read us a portion of "Charlotte's Web", a book that she had brought with her. When the week was just about up and Laurel had to leave, we still weren't finished with the story. I was so upset because i wanted to find out what happened to Wilbur at the end. But, when i was about to go to bed the night she left, her book was waiting on my pillow for me to pick up where she had left off! I was so excited and I felt so special that she had left it for me! And I still have it, too.

Laurel would always include Bible verses or words of encouragement and wisdom for us along with our birthday cards and money each year.

When we were little, I remember Rachel and I agreeing that, if for some reason something happened to our parents, we would want Auntie Laurel to take care of us.

You and I have shared many special moments, both good and bad. One of the most difficult was when Dad left this Earth, and the moment just before. Of course he had to go making us laugh one last time.

In Ohio, Laurel had a blind date. It may have been her first since her marriage ended. She greeted the guy with sunglasses and a cain. He greeted her with dead silence for the first hour of the date. She called me to tell of her practical joke. I loved it. I told her I was very proud of her and that she didn't want to be with a guy who didn't have a good sense of "humah."



Dad would have been proud when his kids sat around him and planned his funeral mass, brochure, wardrobe, etc. Our version of the Rosary on the other hand would have made him spin!

Laurel was the first to leave home. I was sleeping on the floor in the upstairs hallway the morning Laurel left for college. I hid under the blanket when she came to say good-bye. I cried when I heard the car pull out of the driveway and cruise down the street. This began my tradition of tearful good-byes. Thank you very much. The Kleenex company appreciates it.

Laurel is the only one who, besides my dad, had offered to be written into Caryl's and my will, to be the guardian of our children, to come out here and take up residence, in the case where something should happen to us. That says a lot about a person's character. Thanks, Laurel. (Only a few more short years, and it looks like you'll be off the hook!)

Believe it or not I'm still farting from the dried pineapple you send each holiday season. Must be the pineapples. What else could it be?

I remember that every time that Lo came to visit she would sing us to sleep and stroke our hair until we fell asleep, which would take forever because we would stay awake on purpose to keep listening to her sing.



All I can think of is there's quite enough love for everyone in this very room, there's quite enough love for everyone in this very room, there's ...

At Seneca Lake, Laurel taught Emily, Mandy and I a song "In this very room". We spent all week practicing the song. At the end of the week we put on a little concert for the rest of the family.

Auntie LoLo, I will always remember you chasing me and saying "you get back here, right now."

Thanks for keeping up the spirit of praising the Lord throughout the day. Especially at meal times; Connor still sings: "Alleluia..." after we pray.

Auntie Laurel is the only woman I know who doesn't care about how her hair looks when it comes to swimming in the pool or ocean.



I saw Laurel in a modern dance recital when visiting her at Ohio State. I'll never forget the male dancer shuffling around her while flailing his arms up and down. I couldn't help laughing during the performance. Evidently, it made an impression on me as I headed for OSU a few years later to flail my arms up and down in design school.

I've never used flail in a sentence before.

Laurel and I used to dance a lot together when we were little. I was always the girl since she was bigger and could pick me up in special poses. Whenever I didn't get it, she would drop me and yell at me. "Not that way stupid!" It's okay. I forgive you.



I remember her helping out at dance camp and she taught us African character dancing and we had to do so many funny movements with our but like rockin' the baby, cookin' the bread and sweepin' the floor, she had so many fun ideas.

In "those" days, we dressed up to go on the plane. So, Mom and I got fancied up and flew to North Carolina to see you in College. It was so exciting to see you there and go shopping. We went to a candle store. I got an owl candle and had it dipped in yellow and green to make it a special color, then we got rock/pebble candy.

When in your were in your first year of college you sent me a large bag of large conversation hearts for Valentine's Day. I was thrilled to have such a big bag to myself; but I don't remember eating them. I still do love the treats you send all of us.



We asked for a water filter for Jessie to take to school. Well, you ordered one from Shaklee without a second thought. Funny thing, we got two. One for Jessie's dorm and one for our kitchen. Thanks!!

I almost went to NC State, but at the last minute changed my mind to go to OSU so I could get to know my oldest sister. We had some fun times with Mark as you cooked for us and bailed us out of financial stress many times... ha ha! It was one of the best decisions I made and now you're one of my best friends. I love you, Laurel.

I can't tell you how much it meant to me to have you come out for two of my pregnancies and help out with the family. You did so much and everything from blow-outs, scooping poop and wiping buns!!! Plus, every other thing not mentioned. I guess I could call you a saint to have to deal with all of us. I know we had a few tense moments, but we all had fun most of the time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Laurel got a job at the Food Store in town. She used to bring home special treats when she returned late at night. I remember getting to share quite a few times Sword fish broiled with lemon butter salt & pepper was one of my favorite late night snacks with her.



When you went to the mountains or somewhere, you bought me a ring and you promised me you would take me there some day. I am still wearing that ring.

I was around 13 or 14. Laurel brought me down to the NJ Shore with some of her friends. I had a wonderful time. We bought salt water taffy and I picked out a fake gold ring and had my initials engraved on it. Boy, did I feel special.

I remember when I first met Laurel: she was a little intimidating at first - she seemed older than me, even though she was two weeks younger than me. I guess it was because of her confident and strong personality. But as soon as I got to know her, I thought she was pretty cool, as the older sister of my girlfriend.

When Caryl and I began our new Christian walk, we would pray for Laurel, among others, and it was exciting when we heard she was attending an alternative folk mass at her church. That was the first step for her. I never thought she would be comfortable outside the traditional Catholic church. And now, missionary trips, a real prayer warrior, Christian activist in her school and community, its been quite a journey. What a transformation - you're a butterfly, Laurel.



And then there was the year of plans and preparations for her wedding. So much detail and stuff to arrange and deal with... and the give and take between Laurel and Genevieve. It kinda set my mind to having a small and simple wedding!

She will be remembered by me as the sacrificing and giving aunt, who has sent each of her Voorhees nephew and nieces to the Summit for their indoctrination to the Christian world view (and trans-continental adventure!), and who has always been so selfless and giving at our family reunions. She is the only one, besides the kids, who has spent more reunions sleeping on alternative beds, than in bedrooms.

A lake tay ate, A lake tay ate, apples and bananas,U luke tu ute, U luke tu ute, upples and bununus, ...just one of the many fun songs you taught us. Do you wonder why I married a teacher?



When we were little, I remember playing "Witch" with you, Mike and Caryl. Somehow I was assigned the part of the witch and got to wear that green floral print fabric that served as my cape. I was doing well chasing & scaring my brother and sisters, having so much fun. When we finished you told me that I was the best witch. Now as I look back, maybe the part of witch was the lousy part of the game; you all got to hide. Still, I felt so accomplished and happy that I was the best.



Cooking Nutra Nuts...enough said! Except, your long hours, your ear, your shoulder, your financial help, your friendship have been very much appreciated. Get sleep while you can, we've got more to cook!

Remember the fancy built-in vanity Dad built in the girl's bedroom? It had pull-down side drawers, a half circle center swing out drawer. Place for all you make-up and hair combs.

When Laurel was between ministry jobs, she stayed with Kathy & me for a few months (not long enough. It was nice having her in the house with us) She was always surprising us with a just cleaned floor, something to eat when we got home or taking Pierce for good morning walks. The topper was when Laurel helped me prepare & paint the outside of our house. The super topper was when she helped me clean and paint the dingy furnace at the Hird's in Upper Ridgewood.

There are so many things to appreciate about Laurel! She is so loving, gracious and caring for people. She has incredible compassion for people who are suffering. She's quick to take one of her gourmet meals over to a family who may have someone in the hospital or going through a hard time.

She also has such energy, self-discipline and drive! She always has the energy to help others. I want to be like her when I grow up!!!

On our first Porro reunion, Laurel brought a craft for all of us girls to work on. Emily, Mandy, Rachel and I all sat around for hours that week in deep creek bending wire hangers and making yarn bunches that we eventually turned into our little yarn dogs. I still have mine in my room.



Laurel was in the Bolshoi Ballet with Barbara Hoff & Janet Witzhaven. Mom took us to see the performance at the Old Metropolitan Opera House. It was there that I saw that there were male dancers leaping all around the stage. Soon after I began taking lessons at Fokine's (50th Anniversary in 2000) which allowed me to dance the next year in the Bolshoi's performance of "Dance School" in New York and Philadelphia. Seeing Laurel dance got me started.

My first trip on an airplane, when I was about seven, was taken to visit my Auntie Laurel. She flew me out from NJ for a visit to Ohio and to take me skiing - another first. On that trip, I remember visiting Deecy's cool design office, stopping by to see Uncle Mark who had a water bed (which wasn't made), and reading Shel Silverstein with Laurel in a room full of Shaklee stuff. To top it off, I got my very own little Shaklee vitamin box. It was quite an adventure and I was very sad to leave. I remember crying during most of the flight home.