



Remembering B. J.

Marti Glenn, PhD, and Wendy Anne McCarty, PhD

Dr. Bobbi Jo Lyman passed away on May 4, 2011. For nearly two decades, she passionately devoted her life work to the field of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology (PPN) and the message that our earliest life experiences are of vital importance.

She willingly took on the most challenging jobs to help our young pre- and perinatal discipline mature and expand. She was the Editor of the APPPAH Journal, an APPPAH Board Member, Chair of the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Program at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute, and the Chair of the 2010 APPPAH International Congress.

Born Roberta Jo Pettit, she sometimes called herself “Bobbi Jo” and became affectionately known as “B. J.” to family, friends, students, and colleagues. She was a student of life, a perpetual researcher and a supporter of all who crossed her path. Her career spanned over four decades and included musician, entertainer, psychologist, teacher, researcher, and writer.

B. J. was born September 28, 1946 in Rochester, New York. Her parents were George and Helen Pettit, who were both teachers and musicians, certainly a portent of things to come. When B. J. was a year old, they moved to Long Beach, California to be near her mother’s family. B. J. attended the local schools and graduated from Wilson High School and, with two other girls, formed a band called the *Pretty Kittens*.

For five months in 1967, the band entertained the troops in Vietnam—singing, playing banjo and guitar. It was a time of high excitement, danger, hardship, and some close calls. Later B. J. formed another band and returned to Vietnam under the auspices of the Department of Defense. There are undoubtedly thousands of troops who served in Nam who remember her. In the years following her return, she travelled across the country singing as “*Lady O*” of *Rock and Roll*. She was compared with Janis Joplin and Minnie Riperton. And, in the book, *A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of Twenty-Six American Women who served in Vietnam* (Presidio Press, 1997), this compilation of the experience of the war in Southeast Asia devoted one chapter to B. J.’s two tours (1967-1971) as musician/entertainer to the troops.

In 1983, there entered a new and vital character in B. J.’s life. Kit Lyman came from Bremerton, Washington to visit his brother in Long Beach. They happened to be at the Marriott Hotel having a drink and the featured entertainment was—you guessed it—B. J. Pettit. Kit’s brother says, “It was love at first sight.” B. J. and Kit were married in the following year. Kit worked at the Bremerton Naval Shipyard and B. J. went back to school.

B. J. was an adventurer at heart and found herself back on the road in a new way. In 1984, she and Kit got Gold Wing Road motorcycles and traveled extensively. They were active members in the Gold Wing Association of Washington. B. J. became the Chapter B Director and their National Public Relations Director. One of her tasks was producing the annual talent show. She wrote and performed an original theme song for the group. In her spare time during rides, she would engrave her beautiful designs on the bikes of the members of the Gold Wings: A multitalented woman. She earned five degrees over the next decade:

- Associate of Arts degree from Olympia Community College
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Washington
- Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy from Pacific Lutheran University (1991)
- Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from The Fielding Graduate University (1997)
- Doctorate in Clinical Psychology with Behavioral Health Specialization from Fielding (2000)

Her doctoral research was entitled “The Effects of Maternal

Stressors on Behavioral Conditions Found in Human Newborns.”

B. J. had a private practice from 1991 to 2003. She worked with children, adolescents, couples, families, and geriatric adults with presenting problems from mood and personality disorders to major mental illnesses and liaised with other professionals, physicians, lawyers, and school officials. During this time she was the owner/manager of a counseling firm, providing services to the State of Washington and the Veterans Administration. She supervised up to six employees performing disability assessments, facilitation of retraining services, occupational research, and forensic/expert witness work.

Teaching and mentoring became her passion. She began teaching at City University in 1998 and received their “Teacher of the Year Award” in 2004. She taught at Olympic Community College, Washington School of Professional Psychology/Argosy University, Walden University, and Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Her biggest contributions were perhaps made in her role as Chair of the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology Department at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute. In 2003, B. J. and Kit were in San Diego for a conference. She suggested they stop in Santa Barbara for a minute on the way home. She wanted to “see someone.” As Kit waited at the curb, B. J. went into an unmarked building and came out with a new job—Chair of the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology (PPN) Department at Santa Barbara Graduate Institute.

From 2003 to 2008 she served as Chair of the PPN Programs at SBGI where she was masterful in teaching and mentoring students, developing curriculum, and supervising doctoral research. As an integral part of the SBGI team, B. J. implemented the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology (PPN) certificate program that introduced many to the field of PPN. She helped to shape numerous Master’s projects that are still serving communities far and wide. She also guided PPN doctoral dissertation research. All this and more she did with great skill, passion, and compassion. She taught Lifespan Development, Research and Evaluation, Dissertation Development, and numerous courses in Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology.

B. J. was one of the true pioneers in Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and one whose gifts will continue to give for generations to come. She published over two-dozen scholarly articles and editorials regarding prenatal and perinatal psychology. She also served as primary faculty/mentor or committee member on over 100 Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. Her first book, *Prenatal and Birth Memories: Working With Your Earliest Experiences to Help Your Life Today*, serves as a practice manual for clinicians and a workbook for

clients. She also left an extensive working manuscript for a second PPN academic book.

B. J. was the Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health* from 2002–2010 and served on the board of directors for the Association for Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH) from 2008–2011.

In 2009, B. J. announced she was retiring as Chair of the PPN Department at SBGI. She and Kit moved from Santa Barbara to Hemet, CA. They looked forward to traveling with their new motorhome and enjoying activities in their new community. Yet B. J. just could not let opportunities to contribute to the Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology community go by. She came back to work half-time at SBGI and continued as the JOPPPAH editor longer than she planned. She remained on the APPPAH board, and then took on the challenging task of chairing the 2010 APPPAH International Congress—the most successful Congress in two decades! We lovingly joke that there was just one thing B. J. was not good at - retiring!

We have all lost a devoted friend, mentor and colleague. And, the world is a much better place because B. J. Lyman was here. She leaves her mark on all our hearts and her influence will be felt for generations.

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