

*Tribute to Allen (Al) Merton and Ethel Enloe Son/Toppin
By Allen (Al) Chapman Ballard, March 2019*

William (Bill) Ballard was born in Kansas, moved Denver.
Ethel Toppin was born at home in Golden, Colorado.

Bill and Ethel Son were married in 1944 as Bill was returning from serving in the Navy. They could not have children and decided to adopt through a Catholic agency on West 29th Avenue, Denver, CO.

I was born on April 30th at Saint Anthony's Hospital, south of 20th Avenue and Sloan's Lake, Denver and immediately transferred to the Catholic agency.

Ethel, who became mom, said the large room was full of babies due to the war ending and she looked at every one. The last baby she saw with this long legged, 5 lb., 9 oz. boy that she felt sorry for due to my size. Linda my wife for the past fifty years believes she selected me as she was small also, less than 5' tall. They adopted me within three days of my birth and I was taken to Golden, CO., to live with mom's parents in the same house she was born in.

Bill became a master mason, specializing in block, brick fireplaces, known as Russian Fireplaces. He was highly sought out for residences in the Denver area, as it boomed with new housing. He was amazingly strong, stocky, was loved by builders, customers, enjoyed life, however, he became an alcoholic. He was a party alcoholic, the life of the party and always ready to buy a round for the bar as his profession provided excellent income.

Mom had worked at Coors Ceramics' in Golden, during the war and had always enjoyed a good time, however, very concerned as the bills did not get paid as Bill would get paid and go to a bar, spending all the money. As she was left to raise me in their new home in Edgewater, CO., the pressure of unpaid bills and the strain of Bill's alcoholism

became too much and she made the courageous decision in 1948 to divorce Bill. She worked in her father/Ernest Son grocery store, the café next door with her mother, Mabel and her aunt/Ruth and uncle/Earl's flower shop in Wheatridge, CO.

Mom met Al Toppin at a north Denver bar, in 1949 and they were married in 1950. She did not know that he was another alcoholic only emotionally and physically abusive to her and me. They lived in the home that Bill and she had purchased in Edgewater, CO., which became a daily war zone as she began to have signs of emotional trauma and his drinking; fighting became a normal part of their lives.

My step father was a stable financial provider and pleasant when he did not drink, he worked for one company for forty seven years and they had excellent health care. Mom became emotionally challenged early in my childhood had a number of suicide attempts, mental treatment experiences; however, she always tried to protect me during periods of trauma.

Both of them were happy that I was a Marine and extremely happy when Linda and I announced our marriage. Mom desired constant contact with both of us, while caring for my grandmother, Mabel, while trying to get my step father help for his alcoholism. Al passed away 12/23/70.

Linda, the family and I relocated to Alamosa, CO as a management opportunity and this is where mom's life changed. She visited during Halloween and participated in our Adams State College Youth Group event; she was touched by the love these students shared, as well as calling us mom and dad. She sought her faith and accepted Jesus at 65 years old. I was at her baptism and she came up out of the water, screaming with joy, her life turned around and she was a changed woman. She truly enjoyed her church, their activities, Linda and me, her seven grandchildren and the rides on my motorcycles.

After we moved to Canon City, CO, to begin our fine dining restaurant sojourn, she became depressed due to a failed relationship with a man and her health deteriorated. It was at this time that we brought her to live with us in our carriage house on the property. It was at this time she, Linda and I began new, loving relationships. She enjoyed her time with us, the community, until she had a series of heart attacks and needed to be in a care center.

Mom's decade in the care center was a period of joy for her, as we saw her almost daily, to help her with her dinner. It was during these times that she truly became great grandma Ethel to our children, grandchildren and a loving mother to Linda and me. We cried together, we laughed together and we dealt with the aging process for both of us. She was extremely happy that God had identified Mary Ann as my half sister, birth father side, as she knew her time was approaching. Mom passed away, 5/5/18, at 99 years, 9 months, with Linda and I present to pray over her and read scripture. She would have been extremely happy that my birth mother was identified and that I now have seven brothers and sisters, as well as Mary Ann and Chuck to share these ending years.

Mom dealt with many traumas in her life, emotional issues which were disabling at times; however, she ended her life for the last two decades full of faith, changing her into a loving spirit.

Thank you mom and dad, for providing for me as a child, dealing with my troubled youth and guiding me towards appreciating the future with a faith, wonderful wife and family. I love you guys.

Little Allen Ballard from Edgewater.