



Joan M. Culnan

November 22, 1945 - May 10, 2011

Joan M. Culnan, wife of former Courier-Post columnist Dennis M. Culnan, died in his arms while they slept Tuesday morning, three days after their 45th wedding anniversary and her release from the hospital to home hospice care. She was 65. A cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance, she is survived by her husband, Dennis, Sr. of Mount Laurel; two sons, Dennis, Jr. of Mount Laurel, and Dr. Derek M. Culnan, his wife, Jessica, and their two children: Dillon, 3, and Kaitlin 1, of Harrisburg, Pa.

In 1976, her husband wrote the following column to honor their 10th wedding anniversary.

WOW! WAS IT really 17 years ago? I was only 14, a punk high school freshman trying to prove how tough and slick and bad he was. "Tough" wasn't just fighting tough. "Tough" was the way you dressed, whom you knew, where you went and how you made out. I had a "tough" mouth. I talked a good fight, a good dance, a good night in the back seat of a parked car.

I just wasn't—even at the callow age of 14—the guy you'd want your sister to date. But all of a sudden there she was, sweet and shy and delicate as a snowflake...a girl named Joan. I was in love. Yeah, you do fall in love at 14...and you fall in love a million times after. If you're lucky, you fall in love most of those times with the same person. Everybody told her to stay away from me. "He's no good." "Nice girls don't go out with him."

But, as I've always told her, she's a dumb Polack...too dumb to know the kind

of guy she shouldn't fall in love with. She did what she wanted to do. She may weigh only 100 pounds but no one pushes or shoves her or makes her do anything she doesn't want to do.

So, throughout high school we went steady but it was a rocky steady. We broke up every week. Boy, was my Polack thick. And talk about stubborn! It seemed we were always fighting over the same thing. I kept telling her I'd respect her—I had told a lot of girls I'd respect them, and they bought it. But she kept telling me about God and marriage and lot of other jive that meant "No!" (Boy, those nuns really did their job.)

We broke up, made up and broke up again. If it wasn't because "things are getting too serious," it was because of her mother's complaints about my running around with my shirt wide open in public or my irresponsibility in accumulating a record 173 parking tickets in one year.

While Joan was racking up first honors in school, I was garnering suspensions and detentions like they were going out of style. But somehow I managed to write an essay and win a scholarship to a journalism school.

I don't know exactly how that crafty Polack engineered it, but we got married. Oh, sure, we loved each other but "love" was, and still is, a terribly misused word. I think we got married because all of her girlfriends were getting married and she didn't want to be the only girl on the block without a husband.

Everybody knew it was doomed from the start. Everybody knew I wasn't the marrying kind...a leopard doesn't change its spots...an alley cat is always an alley cat. I could have saved a lot of time, packing and leaving...and a lot of damn bruises too...if I'd known then what I know today.

You just can't imagine how much wallop 101 pounds of enraged Polack can pack until she's jumping on your chest for not coming home until eight in the morning.

You can't imagine how infuriated you can get until your wife speeds off in a huff, leaving you choking and gasping in a cloud of car exhaust fumes and facing a five-mile walk home. Talk about temper!

BUT THEN YOU remember those late sleep-ins until dinner time on Sunday,

those self-declared holidays in mid-week. You remember sitting on a curb in stone Harbor on a lazy Sunday morning, eating cream doughnuts and drinking chocolate milk. YOU REMEMBER the scraping and scrimping...TV dinners seven days a week, 50-cent lunches five days a week and freeloading a free dinner at our parents' whenever we could. You remember a very fashion-conscious wife making do with an outdated wardrobe to save toward a house. You remember the big weekend treat: Driving over for a 99-cent breakfast special, and visiting the construction site of a house you prayed wouldn't be finished until you'd saved enough for a down payment.

You remember the conflicts. A girl-woman torn by the Cinderella dream that all American girls grow up believing. It's getting married and having children and staying home to live happily ever after. A girl-woman faced with the reality that dreams cost money, two salaries are better than one and a career is preferable to the intellectual wasteland of TV soap operas. YOU REMEMBER the smile on her face when she came out of a drugged sleep to greet the son she'd just brought into world: "Hi, Little Den." You remember the good and you remember the bad. There were times...many times...when we felt like throwing in the towel. Instead, we invested another day, another "I'm sorry," another "We'll try again" (because love is being able to say "I'm sorry.") OH, WE'LL FIGHT again and I'll walk out again, only to drive to the nearest phone to give her a chance to ask me to come home. But I'm no longer that tough, punk kid of 14, although I'm still brash and loud-mouthed. And she's no longer that naive and shy little girl, although she's still shy and naive. I still love those memories, but I couldn't love or live with that little girl I met 17 years ago, or that girl I married 10 years ago or even the confused girl-woman of five years ago.

Nor could she love or live with that punk kid she met 17 years ago, or the bridegroom he was 10 years ago or even the ambitious egotist of five years ago. (I'm still egotistical.) BECAUSE WE'RE no longer those people...they were yesterday, we are today. We've grown away from those people. We've

grown away from them, together. How much you grow isn't important. What is important is that you grow together.

We've grown a lot in 17 years and we've fought to grow together. If we hadn't, we'd have grown apart and our love would have died. Saturday we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary. There's no guarantee for a 25th or even an 11th. You don't get any guarantees with marriage. You get a chance to invest and if you're willing to invest enough...if both are willing to invest enough... sometimes it works.

Look, Mom! I've made it...so far.

She is also survived by her sister, Diane Taylor of Mount Laurel, brother-in-laws William McGraw of Mount Laurel and Ronald Culnan and Kenneth Culnan of Philadelphia, as well as nine nieces and nephews and 15 great-nieces and great-nephews.

Mass of Christian Burial will be held Saturday at 10:00 a.m. at St. Mary's Church, Springdale Road, Cherry Hill where friends and family will gather at 9 a.m. for a musical interlude. Viewing is Friday 6 to 9 pm, Bradley's Funeral Home, Route 73 Cherry Hill. In lieu of flowers, contributions are requested for the Cooper Hospital Foundation. Arrangements by BOUCHER FUNERAL HOME, Deptford.

Tribute Wall



“ *Joan M. Culnan*

November 27, 2022 at 03:45 PM



“ *Dennis,
Please accept my condolences for the passing of your wife Joan. I had been out of the country for a couple of weeks when Joan passed. I was truly moved by the obituary and your story from many years ago. You obviously loved each other very much, and I'm sure this is a very difficult time for you. I hope you can find some solice in all the fond memories of better times you shared. My thoughts and prayers are with you.
Mark Neisser*

Mark Neisser - June 02, 2011 at 09:50 AM



“ *I'm very sorry to hear of your loss.
Joan was a perfect person and always was very nice to me at Rohm and Hass over our many years working together.*

E. Denny Arket - May 15, 2011 at 10:10 AM

TM

“ Dennis- Some years ago, I engineered a most well-deserved award for the Courier-Post's Kathleen Rowley on behalf of the trade association I ran (but it was really because of what she did for the public)..I would bet the house that you asked me if you could accompany Kathy rather than the other way around, because Kathy, being such a shy, laid-back (and, to me, ultra-classy) lady had that number one fear of the populace - public speaking..Anyway, you accompanied her out to Chubby's and helped make the night for her, especially with your words of praise from the podium..I respected you for taking the time to do your thing on her behalf..and I am sure that your wife recognized and dug such kind gestures. I just read of your loss (along with that great 1976 column) and was moved to express my condolences..Some of us never forget the kindnesses of others, of which it is obvious was also the rule with Joan, who also obviously practiced such kindnesses, as well.

Tom Madden - May 14, 2011 at 12:53 AM

IR

“ Dennis: Eric and I were so sorry to hear about your loss. Our deepest condolences to you and your entire family.

Ivy Rovner - May 12, 2011 at 10:50 AM

RM

“ Joanie was the best. She was fun and generous and smart. And she was loyal. I always said you were the one I would call if I found myself in a hot spot at 1 a.m. I made a few of those calls to you. Joanie was the one who told you, Go get her. My heart is with you and your family.

Renee Winkler McCarthy - May 12, 2011 at 07:17 AM

JR

“ Dennis, Sorry to hear about your loss. Barbara and I want you to know that you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Joe

Joe Rodriguez - May 11, 2011 at 09:33 PM

BM

“ Our deepest condolences to Denny & his wonderful family. I am one of the many folks that worked with Joan in the financial division under the controller.

I must say all the folks that worked with Joan will surely miss her. Many a good time I know my wife & I had with Denny & Joan; such as, when we went to Bermuda together in 1980 & to New York years later to see a show on Broadway.

At work we all worked meticulously at our jobs & especially Joan. There were fun times as well. I recall one time when I believe it was Joan's birthday & Denny called both myself & Jay Harowitz. He said, I'm sending a beautiful bouquet to Joan & I'm having it delivered to the gatehouse. Will you be good enough to go get it & put it on Joan's desk when she leaves the area for a few minutes. We told him no problem.

We went to the gatehouse & with the two devious minds of Bill Morell & Jay Harowitz we decided to remove Denny's card that came with the flowers & we inserted ours instead.

I think it said, Happy Birthday Joan from your best friends Bill & Jay. Anyway, we finally owned up to it & Joan was especially happy to now know Denny didn't forget her birthday.

Nonetheless, we are very saddened to have heard about Joan's passing, but she had put up one courageous fight.

God Bless her.

Bill & Dolores Morell

Bill & Doloes Morell - May 11, 2011 at 06:03 PM

K(

“ *My sincerest condolences 'little' Denny & family. Her strength & courage are admirable, draw from that strength in the days ahead & know she is with you always. God Bless & may she rest in peace.*

Kristen Davidson (Brach) - May 11, 2011 at 03:00 PM

ED

“ *To a beautiful woman who graced those around her with her gentle, kind and peaceful way. I am glad to have known her. She will be missed.*

Elaine Dezenski - May 11, 2011 at 02:48 PM

TC

“ *Dear Denny, Denny Jr and Derek,
Our deepest love to all of you in this difficult time. You've been through so much together. We wish your many wonderful memories of Joanie will give you comfort and strength.
Love, Meryle and Joe*

The Countess - May 11, 2011 at 02:35 PM

JC

“ *Dennis, please know that Joan will be in our prayers. Jack & Rosemary*

Jack Connors - May 11, 2011 at 01:42 PM

CS

“ *Denny and family, I am so sorry for your loss.
May fond memories of Joan comfort you.
I'll keep you and the family in my prayers.*

Catherine Slowicki - May 11, 2011 at 12:25 PM

LK

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you an your family, Joanie we are going to miss you!*

Lou & Karen - May 11, 2011 at 09:30 AM

CC

“ *Dear Dennis, I'm very sorry for your loss. My condolences to you and your family as you mourn the loss of this wonderful woman. Sincerely, Catherine*

Catherine Condon - May 11, 2011 at 09:12 AM

JM

“ *Dennis & Family: So sorry for your loss. Call me immediately if you need anything.*

Jim Michael - May 11, 2011 at 07:46 AM