

### Forward to Aunt grace's Note

Grace forwarded me this Eulogy on Uncle Charlie by her niece Teresa done in 1998 for a class assignment. I can attest, she said it all extremely well. After Charlie passed on, Grace Lynn and I spent a lot of time together. As Grace says in her note, Lynn would have loved Charlie as much as the rest of us did. No question, Grace was lonely and after a period met and married and took up the name Sauerman. We tried to coax her to join the reunions in the 2000 timeframe but she just was not up to it.

### Her note & Teresa's Eulogy follow!

Hibert -

Promised you this - How do you like the memories of a little girl just turned 50 yrs old?

Your Lynn would have loved Charlie too!  
Teresa lives in New Hampshire and recently told me of a friend who is into trains just like you -

Love to you both  
Grace

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COMM 500  
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## EULOGY

When I was in the third grade, my mother's older sister, Grace, married. I was her flower girl and although only eight, I fell in love. Charlie, her betrothed, had a twinkle in his eye and a Cheshire cat smile that could steal a young girl's heart. To the rest of the adult world, I was a child. To Uncle Charlie, I was a princess. And like royalty, I seized the moment.

It may have been Aunt Grace's wedding day, but my court awaited. Why I had a beautiful gown, a wreath of flowers, and the piece de resistance, I was wearing a garter belt and stockings with ballerina slippers! As I floated up the aisle, all eyes were transfixed on me. Everyone was craning their necks to see me better. The bride? Well, she was bringing up the rear. Once ensconced on my throne at the reception, I surveyed the rattle. There was nary another little person to be found. This show was mine! I whirled and promenaded with an endless line of partners, my father, older cousins, but most of all, with Uncle Charlie.

My romance with Charlie started about a year earlier. Gracie and he were dating. They loved a good time, and quite often they took me along. They introduced me to the world beyond my New Jersey suburb circle. I stood trembling inside a doorway. Strings of fireworks were bursting in a flurry around

my feet, dragons were undulating past my eyes and a cacophony of foreign dialects assaulted my ears. The Chinese New Year celebration terrified me. One strong arm scooped me up and rescued me from my fright. It was Uncle Charlie. He made me see and understand the beauty and grace of the Dragon dance and many other things that loomed beyond my Irish-Catholic universe.

Uncle Charlie was of German heritage. My family also had some German, but the difference lie in the fact that Charlie had real, live, German-speaking relatives. First generation Americans and some that were not American citizens at all! I made many trips with Charlie to see his aunt and uncle in Styvesant-town on New York's lower east side. At Roselle and ~~Hubert's~~ <sup>GUS'S</sup> apartment I would revel in the guttural tongue of my almost forgotten bloodline, while eagerly getting well acquainted with sauerbraten, dumplings and spaetzle. Sometimes we would visit their home upstate on the lake. They were building it themselves and a wood-heated cellar hole served as kitchen and family activity area. And, marvel of marvels, a hand pump to draw water from the well! But best of all, we slept upstairs in the yet unfinished first floor with only that heat which wafted up through the open door from the cellar. The ultimate luxury was the feather bed that would enfold me in an almost womb-like warmth and security. No second or third generation immigrant off-spring I knew of had feather beds, why had we discarded such a joy?

And if New York (the city and state) were not enough, sometimes Aunt Grace and Charlie would pick me up after work and drive into the darkness to what seemed like we must be going to the end of the world. I would wake up in Baltimore, in a row house, and begin eating crabs and drinking the thickest, sweetest chocolate milk I have ever had. I was introduced to a new form of

dance, the polka. Much later, I would see a movie where one friend was trying to cajole another out of a bad mood. He said, "I am going to take you to a place where everybody is happy and everyone is fatter than you, a polka hall." This has to be the best definition and reason to dance the polka I have ever heard, aside from the fact that Charlie taught me.

They they got married, and my charmed life with them continued. A year or two into their marriage my mother became ill and had to be hospitalized. She was pregnant with her ninth child and there were some problems. The family had to be split up as it is near to impossible to find someone, even a good friend or close relative who is crazy enough to take on eight children raging in age from one to nine years old. For the next month or so, what was a miserable experience for most of my siblings, was a roll in the hay for me. I drew the long straw. I got to live with Aunt Grace and Uncle Charlie. Oh, I worried about my mother, and missed my family. I got to see my two brothers who were old enough to go to school every day, but the younger children were further away and we didn't get to see each other that often. My dad bounced from hospital to assorted households trying to see his scattered family as often as he could. I did feel a tad guilty when I would hear moans and groans from my brothers and sisters about the things they felt they had to endure in their temporary homes, after all, I was living the life of Reilly. My every whim seemed to be Uncle Charlie's command, and on the evenings that Aunt Grace would go out or work late, we would dine together, like two peas in a pod at Nate's restuarant. It soon would be our regular spot.

A little after their third wedding anniversary, while Charlie and Grace were visiting Baltimore, Charlie died of a heart attack. I remember my mother telling me alone, in my bedroom, away from the other children. We talked about the

coming wake and funeral. I had never been to either before in my life. At age eleven, it would be my decision to make as to whether or not I would attend. I remember spending all that day and the next struggling with my feelings and my fears, my guilt at not wanting to go and my sense of loyalty to my uncle. In the end, I chose to forgo the wake and attend the funeral but not the burial. I could acknowledge Charlie's passing and honor him, but I could not bear to see him lying still and silenced in a box or witness that box suspended over a dark, deep hole in the ground.

Since then, I have been to more wakes and funerals than I care to remember. I have buried both my parents and my husband's parents. I have long since gotten over my fear of the dead. To this day I am glad I did not go to Charlie's wake. My first, last and every memory of him is in life. In a life filled with love, in a life brimming over with gusto and vitality. And in life, and forever, an uncle who swept a little girl off her feet.

Here's to you, Uncle Charlie!

