



Mary D. Balderston

May 5, 1959 - February 2, 2024

Mary Diane Balderston (Pollard), better known as “Mom”, “Baba” and “Sissy”, beloved grandmother, sister and friend laid down her sword on February 2nd, 2024 after a valiant and tenacious battle with cancer. She was 64 years young, and really made cancer work for it.

Full of surprises even from the moment of conception, Mary was born to inadvertent older parents Margaret (Tufts) and John Pollard on May 5th, 1959, the younger sister to Bob and Pam, who were teenagers when she made her appearance. Despite a childhood plagued by chronic illness and multiple hospitalizations, she was hell on wheels and never let anyone forget it. Probably thanks to the massive amounts of steroids she was on. Despite driving them all batty, she was cherished by and absolutely adored her family. As her older siblings started to have children of their own, she earned the monikers “Crazy Aunt Mary” and “Aunt Me- Me”, titles she displayed proudly like a badge of honor. Her babysitting adventures became legendary with nieces and nephews and the fun didn’t stop in her teenage years, only ramped up.

After spending her early twenties partying and crafting stories she would have to gloss over at family reunions, July of 1988 found her at Hart Plaza in Detroit, where at a Cheap Trick concert, she met her future husband, Mike Balderston: a tall drink of water who kept obstructing her view of the stage.

She drunkenly hit on his back to the beat of the music, which he apparently found hilarious. They married Valentine's Day in 1989 (where her favorite wedding story involved making a new relative's fake nails pop off from alleged high blood pressure due to lack of enough alcohol), settled in Clinton Township, MI and had two children. Mary was a homemaker who woodworked out of her garage, cooked terribly, taught her children how to read at an early age and unleashed her penchant for country Americana décor on her unsuspecting family.

Unfortunately, despite the romantic choice of wedding date, the couple divorced in 1996, and Mary relocated to Macomb, MI shortly after. She refused to change back her surname so that she and her children would never be seen as different from one another.

Despite the struggle to make ends meet as a single mother, Mary busted her ass and began working as a nurse's assistant in multiple long-term care facilities over the next decade, where she became infamous for her ability to cross great distances faster than people with longer legs than her, informally adopted every lonely elderly resident (and some of the staff younger than her), and managed to accidentally steal a therapy dog named Sadie by rendering her incapable of paying attention to other humans than her.

She befriended many over the years and despite losing touch with some, never forgot them. She became the unofficial "Mom" of several of her son's friends and became the place to raid for snacks and advice, unsolicited or not.

Sadly, her love life never recovered after the divorce of her husband. She suffered domestic violence at the hands of a boyfriend grossly undeserving of her love and shortly after ending the relationship became homeless. She relinquished custody of her children in an act of pure selflessness and fought like a bear to put the pieces of her life back together. She relocated to Port

Huron, MI in order to rebuild and stay close to her kids.

Mary, like all of us, loved and lost. In 2008, while working what would be her final job, she left early one night and checked into the emergency department at Port Huron Hospital with the world's most impressive hematocrit level her nurses had ever seen on a conscious person. She was diagnosed with colon cancer, and thus began a long journey towards the end.

And what a journey it was. Chemo, chemo burns, port issues, remission, relapse, more chemo, more port issues, remission again, relapse again, more chemo. Sepsis. She nearly died multiple times, but somewhere along the way the Grim Reaper got tired of her taunting and just started ignoring her. She never let cancer slow her down much and only a few years ago managed to get high, fell off a bench and detached her retina, much to the chagrin of her daughter and health care team.

Mary was a goofball who loved trash TV (Blind Date, Hoarders and Cheaters being her personal go-tos), tchotchkes, junk food, anything to do with New England and best of all, her family and grandchildren (they were on another level and that's fine, we get it). Her favorite beverage was Coke, and she delighted in disgusting people by adding chocolate syrup in it (her family called it "swamp water"). For some reason, she really liked track suits. Bonus points if they were pink and rhinestone encrusted. She was a ride or die crafter, and the smell of baked apple cinnamon ornaments will keep her spirit alive every autumn until the end of eternity. We will miss her sharp wit, her freakishly good memory and weird off-the cuff songs about every day events such as going to the bathroom.

She was tragically preceded in death by her only son, Ryan. Mary will also be kicking off her reunion tour at the pearly gates with her mother Maggie, father

John, ex-husband Mike and many beloved furry friends from over the years including her beloved Jack-Russell, Bailey.

She leaves behind her hilarious and dutiful daughter Stefanie (Kyle Chandos) of Seattle, WA, granddaughters Freya and Sabrina Chandos (forever “Baba’s girls”), sister Pam Reid (Mitchell) of Traverse City, MI, brother and sister-in-law Bob and Gail Mitchell of Gaylord, MI, along with numerous cousins, nieces and nephews across the Mitten, countless friends, and three cats by the names of Nico, Binks and Zelda, who most definitely were not smuggled illegally into government subsidized housing.

Mary hoped to one day retire on a cliffside in Maine but never got out that way while alive, so her ashes will be hopefully be spread by Stephen King himself at a later date (but probably just by family). We know she would appreciate an Irish wake, but more than that, her greatest sadness while living was that her granddaughters would grow up without her. In lieu of a memorial, please send your funniest and most heart-warming stories of Mary and drink responsibly around your kitchen tables and picnic benches (no eye injuries please) in her honor.

Instead of flowers, please also consider donating to the stellar staff at the Visiting Nurses Association & Blue Water Hospice Home, <https://vnabwh.org/donate/> as a reparation for the countless hours of Cheaters and Hoarders they have suffered over Mary’s remaining months. We cannot thank them enough for the love and care they have provided to her and hope they can continue to care for the Blue Water area for years to come.

As a final note, thank you to her neighbors and closest friends who have supported Mary over the years of coping with the terrible bastard that is cancer. Her kindness and caring radiated back twice as bright in the people who helped lift her up when the American health care system failed her. In the words of Mr. Rogers, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who

are helping.”

Arrangements are in care of Jowett Funeral Home - Port Huron.

Tribute Wall

CH

“ Stephanie that was just absolutely beautiful.
Well I was part of the Shenanigans with her falling off the bench no I didn't push her she did it all on her own I decided let's get some friends together one day And go to the park and have a picnic So we all need a dish And that's exactly what we did, Warning don't smoke pot lol we are all just having a blast laughing telling jokes just a great time so I'm over there cooking on the grill and all of a sudden I hear this thump and I turned over and it was Mary on the ground and that was her head hitting the ground and I was like oh my God are you okay she gets up yep laughing laughing so hard then had us all laughing what she did if you have seen a picnic table that has the opening for handicap to bring their wheelchairs in well she gets to the table for some reason thought there was a seat there and there wasn't well down went Mary, freaked us all out so that is a day I will never ever forget. I gave her the nickname Mar-bear cuz every time I went over her place we always hugged hello and goodbye Mary was like hugging a teddy bear.
Gosh I have so many stories but I'll let somebody else tell a few hopefully somebody will talk about the time we burned her sweatpants.
Fly high Mar-Bear missing you so much.

Charlene

Charlene - February 07, 2024 at 06:00 PM

LH

“ What a beautiful n honest tribute of my childhood friend, just like Mary it brings shock, many laughs n some tears. I can only imagine the hugs she exchanged giving loved ones in Heaven, so glad, blessed & proud to have shared her earthside for 60 years. Job well done faithful servant

Lori (Hockridge) Hanna - February 07, 2024 at 11:37 AM

BR

“ *I had the absolute pleasure of spending the last few months with Mary at Blue Water Hospice Home as a volunteer. She was a hoot to say the least!!! My daughter met Mary too, and now we've all started watching Cops!! She loved her family so very much and talked about Steph and the grand babies often. Love and hugs to all that love Mary!!*

Brianne - February 07, 2024 at 08:19 AM