

# Birthday Card Campaign

Category: Aging

written by Marilyn Barton | February 18, 2020

My awesome friend, Flo, worked as the RN nurse manager of the Spinal Cord Unit at the Veterans Administration hospital for many years. During that time, she married, raised twins and earned a master's degree. Then, in 1990, she came to work at my hospital, and we've been friends ever since.

Flo was generous, had a great sense of humor and always saw the best in people. We said she looked at the world through rose-colored glasses.

Flo tackled tough jobs. She helped the Virginia Board of Nursing monitor impaired nurses as they fulfilled requirements to regain their licenses. She held leadership positions with Pilot International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing and minimizing damage from brain injuries.

Flo enjoyed traveling. Every fall, she drove up to Maine with a group of close friends to admire the foliage and eat lobster dinners. In the spring, her brother hosted family reunions at Hilton Head, South Carolina. Flo always returned to work smiling, tanned and relaxed.

When she retired, it wasn't to see the world or read mystery thrillers but to provide daycare for her grandson. He was a lucky boy have his Mimi care for him the first year of life.

Unfortunately, as the years went by, people close to Flo died one by one. First, her beloved husband. Then, a longtime friend. Then various family members. Flo managed well initially, but then she began to weaken. It saddened me to see someone so active and selfless become wheelchair-bound and dependent on others.

Last year, Flo moved into a convalescent center. With her seventy-ninth birthday coming at the end of this month, it was difficult to know what gift to send someone with such limited living space. I considered flowers, candy, books and crossword puzzles. Then, I recalled how thoughtful a person Flo had been. She was always the first to give a present and the first to send a card to cheer you up or acknowledge a special occasion.

On Facebook, I posted a call for seventy-nine birthday cards, and within two days, twenty people pledged to send one. Some said how much they "loved that lady." A mutual friend furthered the campaign by emailing Flo's former co-workers, which generated another strong response.

I'm hoping Flo will receive enough cards to wallpaper her entire room and brighten her spirits for a long, long time.

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