

Who is Stephanie?

When I think back to the memories I have of my sister, I can't remember a time when she wasn't there to support me. She always encouraged me to dream and be creative. During an afternoon of playing with Stephanie and my brother when I was 5 or 6, Stephanie encouraged me when I pretended to be invisible while my pragmatic brother tried his best to discourage me.

Stephanie was always there to support me when our mom couldn't be there. Stephanie went to my 3rd grade science fair open house. The rubberized egg experiment I demonstrated was simple but I was so proud. I remember how excited I was to have her there observing me, she did well in school and I wanted her to know I could too.

She has always seen through the surface value of people to their individuality and depth. We grew up in a homogenous community. When I was in the 5th grade and Stephanie was a senior in high school she drove me to the Seattle Center to catch the bus to camp. While walking around the center grounds prior to catching the bus I became concerned with the ethnic diversity. She comforted me reassuring me that all people wanted to be treated the same, with love and respect; they just look different. She modeled something I had not been exposed to, valuing people for their differences. I have always been thankful for that experience.

As you may well know, Stephanie has always had a gift for gab. When I was growing up we would have family discussions around the dinner table. Stephanie sat so she could have eye contact with both my mom and dad and used to spear-head what I thought were interesting discussions. I used to become so entranced in the conversations that I would forget to eat. When the meal was over, my parent, brother and Stephanie would leave the kitchen to continue their conversation in the living room while my mom would put a timer on me to finish my dinner. Boy I loved to listen to her.

Stephanie is a sales person supreme. She comes by it naturally as our dad sold everything from apples to furniture to cut keys during his life time. I bet you didn't know how young she was or what she sold. The first product I remember was actually beauty bark but she thought it was fertilizer. Even then she knew in order for things to grow and develop they needed a good support. When we first moved to Edmonds from Spokane I was 4 and she was 11. Mom planted red 4" pom dahlias to fill up the space under the front picture window. Dad spread the beauty bark around the plants after he had fertilized them. So, Stephanie bagged up the bark thinking it was what had made the flowers grow. As I remember we made several sales at the price of 10 cents for small bags and 25 cents for the large ones. She was the brains behind the operation while I was the front man.

Often Stephanie would become our surrogate mom. She would be the mediator between my brother and me when immediate action was necessary. I like to think that these arguments might have contributed to her excellent mediation skills.

She has always been willing to fight for a cause that she believes in. One time I remember in particular was after I swept hay out of our grandfather's jeep. I was 7. He belittled me for doing an inadequate job. Stephanie stood up to him, literally, in my defense. I really felt secure knowing I could depend on her.

I also just wanted to let you know that at times she can have a temper. Once while doing the dishes together, I washed and she dried; she had made plans for the evening after we finished. I knew she had plans so I slowed down. Well, dad had just made a rule that if there was any incidents of name calling the offender would have to write "I will not call so and so _____" 500 times. I can't remember why he created that rule but I am sure there was just reason. Anyway, as I slowed down to the speed of a slow dripping faucet and Stephanie became so frustrated that she looked at me and yelled, "you are a pug nose pig". No sooner had the words spilled out of her mouth than I was screaming, "Dad, She called me a name, doesn't she have to write it 500 times?" As you can imagine she was hot as she realized her plans for the evening had just dried up.

Stephanie was the first one in our family to attend and graduate from college. So, when I had difficulty with some of the frustrating situation that arose my first year of college she was right there to give me guidance. Sometimes she even provided guidance when I didn't feel I needed it.

She has been a tough act to follow. Although I have never gone into administration, I was department head for my special education department for five years. I felt that I could share with her the frustration that my department encountered, as sometimes they seemed to me to parallel her administrative duties. Her advice proved invaluable.

Stephanie has been a dynamic aunt, treating my kids, Hilary and Daniel, with love and respect. And as you can well imagine, she occasionally asks them what they want to do in their future. She is true to her belief that everyone should be thinking about their future goals and have a direction in life.

I admire her qualities as a leader. I envy all of you for having had the opportunity to work with her professionally: she has always fought for what she believes in and always puts kids first.

Love,

Dori
6/8/01