

Book Review by LeRoy Chatfield

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“A Strange Thing Happened on the Way to Church: The Life and Times of Barbara Moore 1922 - 2004”. Edited by John Moore.

It has been decades since I read a book cover-to-cover, but this was one of those times. I was utterly fascinated.

I knew Barbara, but not nearly as well as her husband, John, a Loaves & Fishes friend and colleague of mine for nearly fifteen years. I mostly remember Barbara from her presence and participation at Loaves & Fishes retreats, the annual Christmas party at our home, and occasionally, as a dinner guest.

Barbara was an upbeat and cultured person, interested in the conversation at hand, sociable, and outspoken. Never personally offensive, I hasten to add, but outspoken nonetheless. For me, this was one of Barbara’s most likable traits.

I am not one who pries into the family or personal matters of others; frankly, I believe it to be none of my business. In the case of Barbara and John, I did know – everyone knew – that they had lost two daughters and a grandson in the tragedy of the People’s Temple at Jonestown. As a father of five daughters, I felt this loss in some ominous and frightening way, as if it had happened to me – a loss of unspeakable proportions - and unbearable.

No doubt, it was devastating to Barbara and John, but based on my observations, they accepted the enormity and the reality of their loss. Somehow – I cannot say how – they learned to cope and deal with this outrageous family tragedy, and moved forward to continue to live their lives in service to others.

So many people have been touched by the kindness of Barbara and John; it was fascinating for me to watch this unfold, time and again, in ways large and small, throughout the book, even unto Barbara’s very last days. This kindness to others, is and was, the touchstone of Barbara and John Moore.

The core of the book was written by Barbara through the journals she kept, but after she was gone, John organized her work chronologically, shaped the sweep of the book, and filled in the blanks. YES, the book is about Barbara, but of course, it is about John too. How could it be otherwise? They were a pair, they were partners, they were inseparable, and they lived on the same page - remarkable to behold.

One of the unintended consequences in the telling of Barbara and John's life, is to give the reader a special look at the sweep of change that took place from the 1940's through the end of the century - the lifestyle, the issues of the day, the changes in morality, education, social justice, religious practice, mental health, and much, much more.

Readable, unpretentious. and filled to the brim with observations, *The Life and Times of Barbara Moore*, is precious. I do not ask you to read this book cover-to-cover, one chapter will be enough to give you a good taste of the life and good works of Barbara and John Moore.

You will not be disappointed.