

Rhea Zakich (AKA - Marilyn)

Becomer's Mystery Person of the week - February 18, 2008

Born in 1935 in a small farm house in Brownfield Texas and relocated to Central California with my parents in 1936.

Born as Marilyn Sister in the kitchen of our family home in Akron, Ohio in 1935.

Had 4 siblings. Grew up with 3 brothers. A sister born when I was 17.

Mother had a 5th grade education. Father was a milkman with a horse drawn wagon, until 1940 when he got a truck. Later ran a gas station and sold cars.

Was the first one in my family to graduate from high school

Saw my first movie at age 13 and started a Roy Rogers Fan Club for neighborhood children.

Always felt like a cowgirl but have never been on a horse.

Hated to read so I made up stories and gave book reviews in class and no teacher ever said anything to me about it. (Whew!)

Never read a book all the way through until I was 35 because I had difficulty comprehending what I read.

Wanted kids to like me so I did anything on a dare. Like throwing corn stalks at passing cars at night, hanging under a train trestle with a train racing overhead.

Lost my swimsuit top while swimming with teen friends. Stayed in the lake until dark, after everyone had gone home.

Loved ice-skating and softball as a teen.

Won singing competition in high school (2 guys & 2 girls) and went to Washington. DC to compete.

Two members of the quartet were black and weren't allowed to stay in the same hotel with my white partner and me.

Sat all night on a curb in front of an all-white hotel in protest.

Entered Nurses Training but struggled with Chemistry and Latin.

Streaked down the hall of the men's ward with 4 other students with pillowcases over our heads, thinking no one could identify us. One of the men said, "Hi ya, Red," and I was in big trouble!

Left Nurses Training shortly after that after failing to make the grades.

Composed and sang radio and TV commercials with 2 others.

Married a sailor against my parents wishes and was disowned by my family.

Was abandoned by my new husband 1000 miles from home so I lived a lie and told people my husband was on a Navy tour. Worked as a telephone operator.

Had the marriage annulled a year later, returned to Akron, began to work at Goodyear Aircraft and continued to let people think I was still married.

My boss introduced me to Dan at the Backstage Bar where I worked on the weekends- We went

out to breakfast at 2 am and began seeing each other.

Dan got a job offer in California, and even though we had never talked of marriage, we realized we didn't want to be separated. We decided to marry.

Found a Presbyterian minister in the Yellow Pages to perform the ceremony since neither of us had a church affiliation.

Married in a small ceremony and drove to CA in August 1958, 50 years ago.

Bought a new home 3 yr. later for \$19,200 in Garden Grove where we raised our two sons, Darin and Dean. Still live in the same house (now worth \$600K (2008)).

Joined the United Methodist Church and became involved in every aspect of church work for 42 years.

The Watts Riots in 1965 prompted me to examine what being a Christian meant to me, which led me to become involved in a ghetto in Los Angeles for 5 yr.

Rented a ghetto apartment in a condemned building and opened a childcare and Literacy Center, among other things.

Won several community service awards including Orange County Citizen of the year in 1969. and Garden Grove Community Service Award.

Lost my voice due to a chronic throat condition that eventually required 2 surgeries and 3 months of absolute SILENCE. Sons were 9 and 10 yr. Ugh!

Had an amazing encounter with God after letting go of every hope and dream I'd ever had, since I felt ALL was lost if I remained a mute (doctor's prognosis).

Gave myself a new name, Rhea, which means flowing stream in Greek.

Listened to many conversations as a mute and decided that people with voices weren't doing any better communicating than I was without one!

Created "Tell It Like It Is", (later called, "the Ungame") in 1969 to connect with my family and to help others communicate- The Ungame was produced and marketed in 1972 by two people who had never produced anything like it before-The Ungame began to sell all across the country without any major advertising and in 1980 spread to many foreign countries, eventually being packaged in six pocket versions and translated into 14 languages.

Toured 26 cities every year for the next 12 years, appearing on TV, radio and in many newspapers and magazines.

Ungame sales estimated at 4 million copies in 2006

Became Speaker, and leader of classes, retreats and workshops all across the country (for the United Methodist Church and Camps Farthest Our [CFO]) using material and teaching methods I created.

Invited to Australia (1986 and 2006) to lead retreats and workshops on Communication and Prayer.

Joined the Crystal Cathedral after being a United Methodist for 43 years.

Published a book called, "Adventures in a Laboratory of Prayer."

Became the volunteer, weekly teacher of the women's Bible Study in 2003.

Married to Dan 50 years in August of 2008.

Sons, Darin and Dean doing well and are exemplary citizens.

Praising God for His grace and goodness! IT'S BEEN A GREAT LIFE!