

Frances Lillian Jones was the youngest of eight children born to Joseph and Anna Jones of Cleveland, Ohio. Although she never knew her father, Fran still recalls the song her father once sang to her mother:

*She's my Annie, I'm her Joe
She's my Annie, I'm her beau
We'll get married, nevermore to part
For little Annie Wilson is my sweetheart!*

Unfortunately, Fran's father died just weeks after her third birthday under very mysterious circumstances. It seems that three men came one night to take Joe for a ride in an automobile. He left with the men, over the objections of his wife Anna. The next day, April 6, 1918, a newspaper boy found his body under a railroad overpass near Wade Park. Anna was told that his straw hat blew off during the automobile ride and when he went to retrieve it he fell down into a ravine and broke his neck. No one really knows exactly how he died.

As the youngest of eight, Fran was not always the perfect child. When she lived on Wade Park and 65th street, "where the trolley car turns the corner", she had a neighbor who worked at a chocolate factory. Sometimes the neighbor would bring home a large block of chocolate. On one occasion Fran went into the neighbor's house and nibbled around the edge of the entire block of chocolate. Although she didn't get into trouble, she said she never did that again. But still to this day she has a sweet tooth and fondness for chocolate.

She attended Dunham elementary school up to sixth grade. Dunham was located across the street from the Cleveland baseball field. She loved to peer through a hole in the fence and watch the players. Nearby the school she enjoyed watching the local blacksmith shoe horses. She received a weekly allowance to take the school bus but chose instead to walk to school with her sister so she could save her money to buy a Christmas present for her mother. Another early memory was of attending a Cleveland Indians game that lasted 18 innings. Her brothers were very excited because it was the longest major league game on record at the time. She was somewhat less than excited.

Fran had six older brothers: Bill, Leonard, Alfred, Ray, Joe, and Charles, and one sister Grace. The family was very close and dinner time often found school buddies such as the Campbell boys, John, Harry and Bob at the table. After-school outings and activities were always with members of the group.

During her senior year in high school, Fran began getting rides to church meetings with John Schlarb, in an auto that John borrowed from his father. Fran figures that John Sr. must have liked her, since he kept allowing John Jr. to borrow the car. Three years later John and Fran were married.

In her free time, Fran enjoyed writing poems under the pen name Linda Stanley Palmer. One example:

*My little lad of almost three
Went to the store today for me
He surely did look mighty sweet
As he stopped, and looked,
to cross the street
Coming back, so tiny and wee
This little lad on his first spree
Careful that a car he didn't meet
He had two Fudgesicles for us to eat!*

John and Fran raised their own "basketball team" of five boys. Son Roger now lives in Chula Vista, California, Jon lives in Fort Mill, South Carolina, Lynn lives in Beloit, Wisconsin, Glenn lives in Rockford, Illinois, and Brian lives in Beloit, Wisconsin.

John's work as a skilled machinist required that they relocate frequently, so the family moved from Cleveland, Ohio to Detroit, Michigan and then settled in rural Livonia, Michigan for a number of years. To supplement the family income, John and Fran raised chickens and sold the eggs. What started out as 12 hens in the garage soon turned into a large operation with a two-story chicken coop and hundreds of chickens and one large collie dog.

The family left Livonia, and in a few short years moved from a rented house in Port Carbon, Pennsylvania to a brand new house in North Tonawanda, New York, then to a fancy old house in Pottsville, Pennsylvania and on to an even older house in Rockton, Illinois. John loved to remodel his homes, so there was always a major project underway. The remodeling reached its ultimate conclusion when he built a brand new, split-level ranch home in the vacant lot next to the old house in Rockton.

With five growing boys, John and Fran became active in Scouting. Fran was a Cub Scout den mother for 8 years and John was Scoutmaster.

The family took many trips together. Summer vacations were spent at Riesman's Lodge in Star Lake, Wisconsin and there were many Christmas trips to visit relatives in Cleveland. One year, when eldest son Roger was stationed at the Naval Training Center in Bainbridge, Maryland, the family drove to New York to visit the World's Fair exhibits. In more recent years, John and Fran spent winters at their home in New Port Richey, Florida.

John worked as Plant Superintendent at the Gardner Machine Company in South Beloit, Illinois until he "retired". In anticipation of retirement, John and Fran bought a horse farm on Highway C and Kunz road, north of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. Here they created the Pilgrim's Progress Outpost Campgrounds. While Fran minded the camp store, paid the bills, and registered campers, John was busy carving out new campsites with his tractor, road grader, and dump truck. Fran was devoted to organizing the camp ministry and teaching Sunday school for the young campers.

The single common thread woven throughout Fran's entire life has been her unwavering faith and devotion to God. Her Heavenly Father is her guiding light, filling the void left when she lost her own father as a child. Wherever she lived, she has been active in her church, teaching Sunday school, leading bible studies, and volunteering her skills wherever they could be put to use. For years she has organized and conducted worship services at the campground in Fort Atkinson. Her total time spent in Moody Bible Institute religious training, correspondence courses, seminars, self-study programs, and endless hours of reading and underlining her books would probably be the equivalent of four years in seminary. All this training has allowed her to touch the lives of hundreds of young people in a positive way.

But don't let Fran's mild-mannered façade fool you. She is a political and social activist who has worked long hours for Concerned Women of America, picketed adult book shops, and supported the Patrick Buchanan for President Campaign.

What difference has Fran made in this world? She never received a college degree, traveled to exotic places, wrote a book, published her poems, or received an award. Yet her entire life of service and devotion is a shining example to all her sons and their families, and to all others who are fortunate enough to really know her.

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