

Eulogy for Belinda Gayle Dickey

As spoken by Julian West on July 11, 2025

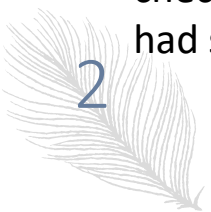
There is a phrase that Belinda Dickey once said to me, at Hillcrest when I was working there and fixing her computer for her. Fixing it was taking me a little longer than I promised, and she said (quote): “Things take longer than they do”. It was a confusing turn-of-phrase for me, because it was the first time I ever heard it. But now, all these years later I understand what she meant. I will be coming back to that phrase, at the end of my remarks here, in a few minutes: “things take longer than they do”. I do want to be brief here, so as not to choke-up...and I am sure I will fail in that effort. So thanks in advance, for bearing with me. I just have a couple of stories I would like to briefly share, in a tribute here to Belinda, this wonderful woman. And – yes I can hear Belinda right now, at this moment calling me out saying: Julian you’ve never been brief at talking about *anything*. Mike and anybody who knows me, would agree with her on that.

Belinda was a creator. She was creative and into so many things. She was a Nurse, yes. She was also a Painter. She played the piano, and organ. She worked in crafts, making things with her hands. She taught children and young people in Sunday school, serving so many people in her church. She was many things. She was Mike’s mom, Jacque’s step-mother, and...to me...she was my second mother. That’s right - I got blessed with a backup mom.



My father passed-away before I turned two, and my Mom struggled with sadness for a period of time, and she moved around a lot. So as a kid I was kind of a traveler. And when my mom settled down a bit, I met a fellow young traveler living in the same apartment complex, Mike. I knew he was cool because he was into ninjas just like me. We became fast friends. He had these cool Chinese stars that you could throw – and remember, this was the 80s when they let us kids play with knives and sharp things. It's amazing we never lost fingers or toes with those things. Mike and I would collect and share our latest knives or bb guns --- safe toys. Mike and I shared a lot, but I can never repay my best friend for sharing his mom with me. The first day I met Belinda, she had just woke from a nap after pulling a double shift at Hillcrest. And she made us lemonade and quizzed Mike about this goofy kid he brought upstairs to the apartment to hangout.

For my own mom that year , it was hard finding work and she was on widows benefits for social security – and so there some really thin times in sour mall household a few times. Today they call it “food insecurity”, but towards the end of each month – I would call it “downright hungry”. It shamed my mother that sometimes this would happen, but I know she was doing her best. Well, we lived just around the corner from Belinda and Michael – and one day during a particularly tough food period: Belinda shows up out of the blue, and tells me and my mom that the *funniest thing happened*. She was at the grocery store and they had all these two-for-one specials on things like Milk and eggs, and whatnot. And she couldn't fit any of it in her small apartment fridge, and could we just take it for her – because she didn't want to waste it. The next month, which was a particularly hard month because I was going through a growth spurt – and eating everything in sight, Belinda swung by again. This time she said to me and my Mom that the grocery store must have messed-up at the checkout, and mixed-in somebody else's stuff -- because somehow she had some more extra things that she couldn't fit in the fridge or pantry.



A couple months later, Mom had an unexpected bill to pay – things were going to be thin that month. And there came a knock at our door, and from around the corner was Mike and his dear mother Belinda – with a couple of bags.

Now, I need to stop and tell you: I was a prideful young kid, and I did not want to feel like I needed charity, or anything like that. I know Mom felt conflicted sometimes as well, because she did work hard to provide for me. It was just hard. Well, when Belinda saw my shame and upset – I will never forget this: she kneeled down to my height, she looked me in the eye, and she said to me, “now Julian, you know I go to church and stuff, right?” I said, “yes”, and she said “well you need to understand something, I am commanded by who I believe is our Lord to help when I see a need. And that to get to heaven, and have my place there, and a jewel in my crown, I have to do things like this from time to time. Now tell me, Julian, do you want to rob me of my reward in heaven?” I said “no” and she popped the bag into my arms and told me “good, now go put these in the fridge and come over later we’re grilling some hot dogs”. And that was that. Belinda would entertain no shame, and no feeling sorry for myself. She was tough, that way. She and Mike and the whole family, and many ways, toughened me up – there was no time to feel sorry for myself, there was today. This moment, and the next moment.

And you know what? That was probably Belinda’s first big lesson to me: because things do get better. They do, it just takes time and patience. Because sometimes “things take longer than they do”.

Now I need to tell you one more shorter story, really fast, because it bears on another way Belinda impacted me. I was probably 15 and on my 3rd computer – because, as you all well know, I stand before you a 51 year old computer nerd at this point. Anyway I had built my very



first PC, and couldn't use it yet because I didn't have a monitor (back then, we called the "screens" monitors). That computer sat for a few months at a ramshackle desk of mine, un-used while I slowly saved money for a monitor. And that didn't sit well for Belinda.

One Saturday morning, early, knock at the door. She's standing there with Bobby in-tow, and says "hey I think I got you a monitor – you got a minute to run over to Hillcrest with me?" I was teenager who just woken up, and started to waffle --- and Belinda flashed me this look, I could see in her and Bobby's eyes basically said "kid, don't give us any lip, get in the car".

Well, we whooshed down to Hillcrest where they were offloading old monitors, after upgrades. She had a friend in the IT department hold a couple of black & white monitors, because Hillcrest would offer a deal to sell them to employees. Well fast-forward to say, she made it so that I could continue to learn computers – and a few years later she even helped me get my second IT gig --- at Hillcrest.

That's right, me and Belinda were co-workers for a little bit. That was fun, I got to see and share some fun times with her over there at the Hillcrest Herring campus. And today I am an IT Project Manager, to this day, because of Belinda.

computer screen – might be a way out of poverty for me. And she was right. And it was. That gift turned out to be a big moment in my youth, because without me knowing it at the time, getting that silly computer working changed the trajectory of my life. And I have Belinda to thank for kicking that off.

And those are just two of a thousand stories I could share, but to me they are the ones I feel express Belinda to a T. On Sunday, surrounded by family, when Belinda made her crossing. She took her time a little.



Mike and Paula, and Kimberly, they will tell you – it was little bit. And that was because I believe Belinda was doing work, before she went on to her reward, before she went to be with family. I think she took her time, because she enjoyed hearing the conversations, and she was working on our hearts. We told her we would be ok, but I think she was wanting to make sure. And on Sunday evening before Belinda crossed over, her phrase came into my mind: Sometimes “things take longer than they do”.

In closing I would just like to say to this wonderful person, Belinda thank you. Thank you and we will never forget you. I want to say to Belinda’s sisters and brother, and her nieces and nephews and all of the Warren family, that I am so sorry for your loss. I want to tell all of you, and Mike and Jacque, we all grieve – and no one knows how grief goes. It is a winding road, and sometimes “things take longer than they do” – but I am here for you. And Mike, I just wanna say to my brother – you have been my most generous and best friend, we shared so many things when we were kids growing up – but I can never repay you for sharing your sweet mother with me.

Belinda passed-away peacefully at 9:49pm on July 6th, 2025.

