



Mary Mallard-Barlieb
1941—2026

A letter from Ann Shincovich

Mary Mallard-Barlieb was a wonderful person. She was funny, charming, generous, warm, intelligent, and engaging. She was an excellent conversationalist. I have the privilege of knowing Mary since 2004 when I moved up to Tobyhanna to be Library Director at the Pocono Mountain Public Library. I am grateful she is one of the group of people who decided to hire me. It would be a few years before we became very good friends. Mary became a role model and mentor these 22 years I have been here. I credit her with keeping me sane when I was a new director “not from the area” and during our difficult building project and the many challenges thereafter. She was deeply involved with the library, serving on the board since 1996 and most of those years as the Board Secretary up through 2025. She always carried a paperback copy of “Roberts Rules of Order” and was a real stickler for doing things right during meetings. She was instrumental in the new library building project that went on from 2011 through 2013, and in helping manage the complex legal and financial aftermath during the Great Recession, state funding cuts, and the Covid Pandemic. Mary’s signature is all over the library, both literally and figuratively. She was an avid reader and great believer in public libraries. It showed in her commitment to the library and the community it serves.

Mary cared very much about our town and its local history, and served for many years on the Coolbaugh Township Historical Association board. She worked with her great friends at the historical association, located in the Wills Mansion & Museum. She assisted with maintaining exhibits and collections, and preparing for community lectures and helping with events such as the annual art show, the annual Christmas party, and the annual Ice Harvest reception. There was a core group of individuals at the historical association that kept the museum going for many years, and Mary was an integral part of that group. The fact that these people are all dear friends only made the Historical Association that much better. She belonged to St. Ann’s Church in Tobyhanna and was a participant in ensuring its continued existence as a local historical building because of its ties to the Wills Mansion.

To say Mary was involved in the community is an understatement. It was humbling for me to see how much she did. I learned from her how important being involved is; how much it matters to others. Over the years, aside from the library and the historical association, I learned she was either involved with or supported the Devereaux Foundation, the VFW Post 509, Monroe County Meals on Wheels (as a delivery person), Greyhound Rescue, The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), the Bistro Café for the IHM Sisters at Marywood University, and the Monroe County Historical Association. She attended women’s club luncheons and various fundraisers for the Salvation Army, the (as was) Rotary Pancake Breakfast. She was always doing something with or for someone or agency. This is just scratching the surface. I am sure there was more.

Mary was really good at playing rummy, and would normally win, even though she would always say she couldn’t remember how to play. She enjoyed going to movies. She enjoyed going to lunches and dinners, especially at Cooper’s Seafood House in Scranton. I would hear from her of the times she went with her husband, John Barlieb, for her birthdays and anniversaries before he passed. I was fortunate to have dinner with her at Cooper’s as well. She loved a nice dry martini, grilled salmon, good cheese, dark chocolate, and ice cream. She really liked ice cream!

Mary had a great humorous, stoic personality – never one to stay in a bad mood even when she had the right to. She would always find a way and cheer up others. She certainly cheered me up many times. In the past few years she would often say how she wanted to travel up to Lake Winnepesaukee again, as she had memories of it from when she grew up in Massachusetts. She always told me I should visit Mount Washington and ride the Cog Railway. She would send me pictures of Lake Winnepesaukee on social media for fun. I would joke with her that all she had to do was say “when” and I would happily road trip and drive her up there. But that was just wishful thinking. Although I imagine it would have been a blast, it was not a trip we were able to make.

Mary and I would have long conversations about news, the weather, politics, the Church, culture, food, books, how things have changed, the Poconos, Tobyhanna, her family, my family. We could talk for hours. She could talk about anything with great awareness, humor, and intelligence.

Mary knew that being involved in the community and maintaining her relationships with friends and the agencies she supported and enjoyed, the people she knew, would keep her going as her life got on, especially after her dear husband John passed away. She liked being needed and having a purpose driven life. She continued on the boards of both the library and the historical association, and driving her car to meetings right up to her passing. One of the last library programs Mary went to was our fundraising Paint and Sip. I cherish that we were sitting close enough to each other that I could hear her compliment the wine but criticize her painting and then go on to flatter everyone else’s abilities. She regularly attended our monthly book club and enjoyed funny, irreverent novels. Her presence made every program and event better. She was equally comfortable being a participant or a host, and would help me any time I needed to make an event successful. She always showed up for the library programs and events.

Mary was always a friendly and reliable person. She cared deeply about her family, the community, and her friends. She cared deeply about me and my family, and my role at the library, and it made a big difference in my life. She was a joy to work with and be around, and she was my very best friend. She was the kind of person who understands how to make a difference, how to show up even during tough times, and how to be kind and generous. Those are rare qualities in any person, let alone all in one person. Mary left her mark all over our local community and in the many strong friendships she had with others. I was never in this community or managing the library during a time that she wasn’t here. Many people will never know the influence she had on many of the good things that happened in Tobyhanna. I will always remember her sitting in the chair in my office, and offering advice and good conversation. A conversation with her would leave me knowing that anything was possible. Nothing is perfect. We all just had to keep going, keep trying, and keep doing. I cherish the memories I have of her and the impact she had on my life. She will be greatly missed.



