

Barbara Warren McCall

In Her Own Words/En sus propias palabras

1. Prelude

Sandhills Wind

Sandhills

Wind finds form

In lines of autumn dunes

Brown on brown

With silent, shadow pockets

Opening soft spaces of respite

For remembering.¹

2. Getting to Know You/Aprendiendo a conocerte

Name/Nombre:	Barbara Warren McCall
Years of Life/Años de vida:	March 19, 1914 – October 26, 2007
Career/Carrera:	National Church Executive; Writer; Editor/Ejecutiva de la Iglesia Nacional; Escritora; Editora
A.B. Recipient/A.B. honor:	1987
Hair Color/Color de pelo:	Brunette/Café
Color of Eyes/Color de ojos:	Dark Brown/Café oscuro
Brothers or Sisters/Hermanos o hermanas:	Two younger brothers/Dos hermanos menores
Hobbies/Pasa tiempo:	Staying in touch with friends/Estar en contacto con amigos y amigas

I looked up to/Yo admiro a Leila Anderson,² Nelle Morton,
Ann Bennett, Professor Mary Ely
Lyman³

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² Leila Anderson, also an Antoinette Brown recipient, was a circuit rider in Christian Education for national staff.

3. February 5, 1936, *Dear Father*,⁴

. . . I might have a regular parish [Summer Service Project] which would mean preaching. I don't know whether I'd ever have nerve enough to do it, but I'd love to for the experience as well as the valuable training it would be. The part that would scare me the most is preaching, but that's the very part that would be so good for me.

But more probably, if I do anything, it will be a religious education job, which will mean teaching likely vacation Bible school in several different communities throughout the summer.

It will be very good for me to have [your recent check] and to learn to budget on my own.

Since I have had to give up part of my work, I now have to pay three dollars a week for my room. I am still hoping to pay back to you twenty-five dollars more of that you gave me in the fall.

I can go on much longer but must stop now and listen to the class lecture!

Love to you, Barbsie

John McCall: In her first year at the Chicago Theological Seminary, Barbara Warren had met my father. Her father apparently had indicated he was sending a check to her. Because of her family's privilege, she did not have some of the everyday skills that most of us have.

I was the first child of William Howe Warren and Edith Brierly Warren.⁵ Both my mother and I were given no middle name because our parents assumed we'd get married and stop using it.

My attendance at church and Sunday school became as regular a part of my life as attendance at public school. When I was about thirteen I joined the church along with my companions. It was a step toward

³ See

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/burke/archives/awts/exhibit2.html> . Click on photo.

⁴ Excerpts of a letter home as read by her son, the Reverend John McCall, during phone interview with author. February 6, 2006.

⁵ Barbara Warren McCall's Ordination Paper. September 13, 1938. Unless otherwise documented, italicized text is from this paper.

adulthood and an accompanying sense of responsibility for my church.

As I had never questioned the existence of the church, so I accepted a new position in it without question, and had no period of doubting during my early adolescence, as so many young people do.

4. Most of all my college foundation gave me a conviction,

which can never now be broken, that the ideal of Christ for the life of every [person]⁶ is the one toward which I, with my husband, must work in seeking to bring the Kingdom of God on earth."



After graduation from Holden High School in 1931, Barbara Warren entered Mount Holyoke.⁷

Barbara Gerlach:⁸ At the time, the college was "a hotbed of the first wave of feminism." Mary Ely Lyman, a professor of religion, had a great impact on Barbara.

I did not have what might be called a religious awakening until my second year in college. I went through the usual doubts the first year and was about to conclude that no virile person could be a Christian too. However, during my second year, I was persuaded to attend the Mid-winter Conference at Northfield, and there I was forced to conclude that many worthwhile and attractive young people as well as more mature adults had chosen the way of Jesus for themselves. This discovery and the events of the summer which followed brought me to a personal and private commitment to a life of service in the cause of Jesus Christ.

Several summer work opportunities through the Student Summer Service helped focus her lifework. The intercollegiate branch of the Y.M.C.A. conducted Summer Service Groups that gave opportunity for college students to live in settlements. They gained "a sense of a

⁶ The author has updated 1938 imagery with inclusive language.

⁷ To learn more about this early college for women see <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/cic/about/history.shtml> .

⁸ Author interview with the Reverend Barbara Gerlach. February 5, 2006. Barbara was a seminary middler when she first met BWM at a women seminarians meeting. Later, Barbara McCall would become a mentor and friend.

life far removed from the intellectual and social atmosphere of college," she said.

My summer in the Union Settlement in New York City gave me a social consciousness and a yearning to do something to alleviate some of the conditions of our world.

It seemed to me then that social service must be my life work. However, the work of the summer workers was not something they were impelled to do through their consciousness of the great need. Consequently they had become hardened by it. They lacked a personal religion to give them spirit and impulse.

This double conclusion sent me back that fall to take a major in religion in a search for a life philosophy. These studies, as well as my experiences with a study group of factory workers, led me to an even deeper conviction that I had been called to a life work among people.

Through the religion department, I was given a summer opportunity during 1934 to go to a small Vermont town to live in the parsonage with the two women pastors of the Addison Community Church, and for three months to gain firsthand experience of the life of the ministry.⁹

My experiences ranged from helping to produce a community play to preaching my first sermon. They all served to further my conviction to work among people, but they raised a question as to whether the greater need was in the city or the country.

At her professor's suggestion, she began study at the Chicago Theological Seminary for a Masters in Theology, little guessing that the next summer would take her further west. Her prospective husband remained at the seminary while she gained experience in rural-parish work in Beulah, North Dakota.¹⁰

The liberal professor of religion at college had done much to lay the foundation for my seminary work. For me, there were no radical uprooting of old ideas,

⁹ See Common Lot, Spring 1987, 17.

¹⁰ On a family archive photo from Beulah, Barbara had written, "I had my first funeral here (and only one) for a 3 mos. old baby."

but rather a natural development of new and deeper thoughts growing out of the experiences of earlier days that helped to enlarge my still meager knowledge of church history and theology.

The spiritual experiences and growth of those seminary years cannot be described: The new experience of contact with professors who were also friends, the opportunities to know young people whose earnest purpose is life service in the cause of Christ and to talk with them in deep seriousness in prayer and fellowship groups, and the knowledge gained.



John McCall: Then my mother and my dad decided to share their lives together. He was from missionary parents. He was born and raised in Akita, Japan, in 1912, two years prior to my mother. He was conventional in many ways. He also was handsome and dashing with an unusual family story. She was drawn to him and he to her.

Florence Manthei: "Mac" was a strong-willed person and so was Barbara. It was a good match. Barbara took off the spring quarter to prepare for the wedding. She lost a semester in her studies.¹¹

5. I began to look forward to life with a companion in service with whom I could work more effectively and happily than I could ever have done alone.

Thus it came about that my decision was made. Instead of as a single social worker in either city or rural work, I returned to seminary for two more years training along lines in which I might be able to supplement Mac's work, religious dramatics, and in which I have completed all of the requirements for the Master's Degree except the thesis.

¹¹ Interview at Pilgrim Place, February 23, 2006. Lifelong friends, Barbara and Florence roomed together the first year of seminary. Their future husbands had also roomed together.

As it would again years later, Barbara Warren's ministry was about to find new definition. On June 5, 1937, she married Clarence Field "Mac" McCall, Jr., in Holden, Massachusetts.

She participated in another Student Summer Service summer project in Custer, Montana. On September 13, 1938, she completed her ordination paper. On October 16, she and her husband were ordained together in Roundup, Montana. As co-pastors of the Musselshell Larger Parish, they would serve the churches at Roundup, Musselshell, Melstone, and Sumatra. Four months after ordination, Barbara gave birth to the first of their four children.

John McCall: They lived in a lean-to attached to the side of the church in Round-Up. They shared the church outhouse. There was a sink and a small kitchen.

When my mother said she had to learn how to cook, my wife asked, "Did Clarence help you?"

"Oh, my no," my mother said, "but he was very patient while I taught myself."

The McCall's first two children were born in Livingston, Park County, Montana. In February, 1939, Barbara gave birth to Merritt. Judith was born in March, 1941. That June, Barbara was called to serve the Holbrook Congregational Church of Livingston.

In October, her husband was called to Rapid City, South Dakota. While in Rapid, Barbara gave birth to Robert in 1944 and to John in 1947. In 1948, her husband began a pastorate in Forest Grove, Oregon. During these years they co-led Religious Interpretation Week sessions at several UCC-related colleges in the South.

In 1952, her husband began the conference work he would continue for the rest of his life. They moved to Illinois then Wisconsin and in September, 1965, to Southern California. While Barbara had no formal call, her ministry was supportive of her husband. Her ministry was with a young family.

6. Had you laid aside formal ministry, Barbara?

Had you succumbed to the social expectations of the day? Was this what you knew you could manage with four children? Did you yearn or plan to continue your ministry then or later?

While Barbara may have appeared to set aside her own plans, her ministry was no more stagnant than her mind. She found ministry where she was at the time.

Through reflection and writing, it reached beyond a single parish. Her "Climate for Conversation" in *Children's Religion* addressed family-centered parents. She suggested ways to nurture and strengthen families through meaningful conversation. Start young to move beyond sex role stereotypes, her writing said with a hint perhaps even to herself about her future:

Little Jimmy was having his daily turn at helping with the dishes. Suddenly he looked at his mother and said, "I don't see why I have to help with the dishes. That's women's work."

Taken aback, his mother spoke of the need for sharing work in a home. He was unconvinced.

Mother had an inspiration. "You know, when you grow up and have a family, your wife will be so glad you learned to help when you were a boy. When she's especially tired after taking care of little children all day, she will appreciate your help with dishes."

Quick as a flash came the reply, "I'm not going to help her; I'm going to do them all for her."¹²

An excerpt from a later, reflective article would say:

It was the time of the 30's and the 40's; children were born, and woman's role was to nurture; competition with spouses was frowned upon. Although the McCalls were ordained together, they did not preach together. And so the Reverend McCall raised her family while working as a volunteer with lay groups in local churches and, as their children grew older, in the wider church.¹³

That article opened with these words:

Barbara McCall believes in human liberation — freedom for both men and women — from sex role stereotypes that have stifled individuality and imprisoned too many people in inescapable steel boxes.

¹² BWM, "Climate for Conversation," *Children's Religion*, May 1957, 15-16.

¹³ "The Rev. McCall Pleads for Human Liberation; Begins Third Career — As Pastoral Counselor" in *Institutes Reporter*. *Institutes of Religion in Church and Society*. New York. February 1977, Volume 5, Number 1, 3.

7. "I didn't feel locked in,' [Barbara] said, 'but I was.'

*'I felt then that it wouldn't have been fair to compete with Mac. And I only preached on Mother's Day.'*¹⁴

John McCall: In that extended period of time when she was primarily parent and homemaker, my mother showed strength. She facilitated, expedited and supported my father's extensive ministry. She was strong at home. She was capable in occasional work in religious emphasis weeks and speaking engagements.

Barbara Gerlach: Barbara was happy as she was. She loved her husband and their children. She had a good life. She had spent the time so far as an active volunteer. Then

8. I'll take only one step at a time and then the next one will then come clear.

I cannot keep the house nor is there any reason to for me alone. I must get a job. . . . I am sure it will all work out. I'll take only one step at a time and the next one will then come clear. It's always been so through our life together and I'm sure will continue to be so for me.

Barbara Gerlach: On July 25, 1967, everything changed. "Mac" McCall, 55, died in Pasadena after a massive heart attack. Barbara had to recreate herself -- and she did. She never stopped growing and evolving.

John McCall: When Dad died, everything in her world was turned upside down. In a round-robin letter among forty-year Holyoke friends, Mom said she talked about phoning the children (just out on our own) and finding that she was able to step forward and do what needed to be done. That kind of inner strength almost intuitively was there for her waiting.

¹⁴ As quoted in *Institutes Reporter*.

9. From what reservoir did you tap that strength?

Barbara, seminary study afforded time to re-examine what grounds you, to strengthen this foundation of your being. Now, years fertile with wisdom, you have revisited the Barbara whom you brought to seminary. You have moved forward again in unique ministry. Did you return to your ordination paper of 1938, regaining impetus from its credo?

Barbara Warren McCall's thoughts about God:¹⁵

In a world where so much is unstable, some things change not. There is a harmony in the universe which cannot be destroyed by all our dissonance and discord. Within and beyond this harmony is God . . . God is there to encourage and understand. We can always find God if we seek.

Her Concept of Jesus Christ:

In each human creature, Christ saw God, the spark of the divine. . . . [People in turn] began to see themselves as Jesus saw them, and their weaknesses were lessened, their strengths increased. They began to have faith in themselves again through his faith in them and his teaching of a loving heavenly Guide who saw and loved them and believed in them too. For me, the greatest meaning of Jesus is as a man who lived among others, and who gave to them an example for all time of the God-centered life.

Within a month after her husband's death, Barbara put the house up for sale. In January, 1968, she returned to the Oak Park family church of Illinois years to serve as an associate minister. On May 1, UCC President Robert Moss called her to New York, to her own career and a significant contribution.

10. The personal and the social gospel are inseparable.¹⁶

We cannot live unto ourselves alone, for life loses its meaning and significance unless it can be shared. Any conscientious Christian who looks out upon the world today with its endless suffering and sin cannot sit back and do nothing. It is an obligation resting

¹⁵ From ordination paper.

¹⁶ Ordination paper.

upon the Church, and upon all who call ourselves Christian, to exert all the strength and power and influence available in bettering and changing the conditions of the world today.

Offered the position of Associate Secretary of the Council for Lay Life and Work, Barbara Warren McCall moved from California to New York on what she called her own "pilgrimage to personhood." "What a tragedy," she [would reflect later], "that his death was the catalyst that forced me to become a complete person."¹⁷

John McCall: Her own remarkable step from a place in the shadow would be acted out on a much larger scale in society. What she experienced in a personal way gave her the opportunity to offer that kind of advocacy for women in the church.

11. Chat Room

Barbara McCall and David Jamieson worked together with two other Associate Secretaries for the Council on Lay Life and Work at the time the UCC first reshaped its structure.

David Jamieson: Barbara flourished in that kind of setting. She is a highly creative person with many usable ideas and responsible approaches to liturgy and the inclusive language coming into being at that time. She had energy and excitement about her. She was firm and assertive but not strident. She was gracious, relating well to folks, drawing them out, encouraging them.¹⁸

In January, 1972, she was appointed Special Assistant to Robert Moss. She would serve as Executive for the newly established Task Force on Women in Church and Society. This task force emphasized wholeness, the elimination of sexist discrimination in employment and compensation, use of inclusive language and promotion of equality for both sexes.

Barbara Gerlach: Barbara was not born into being a feminist, though she was always committed to women.¹⁹ She grew in the job and then was tapped to be the Task Force on Women executive. What

¹⁷ As quoted in *Institutes Reporter*.

¹⁸ Phone conversation with the author in early January, 2006.

¹⁹ To learn more, read "Joan Bates Forsberg – Bridge to Understanding" in *Antoinette Brown Women – Finding Voice*.

amazed me about her was the journey that she made long before Betty Friedan wrote The Feminine Mystique.²⁰

President Moss asked Davida Foy Crabtree and Barbara McCall to suggest names of people for the task force. They were to find the best combination of women and men, older and younger, clergy and lay, and racially and geographically diverse. After 48 hours of brainstorming, they emerged from Barbara's apartment with the list.

Davida Crabtree:²¹ Few on Executive Council then were supportive. I was a brand new member, at age 27, and while brash and an upstart, that wouldn't have been enough! Barbara was the shaping force.

Barbara Gerlach: Barbara was a bridge woman in that sense of from one world to another. She was the perfect person for the first two years of the Task Force. She had the ability. She knew *all* the Women's Fellowship women from her work as a volunteer and with Lay Life and Work.

She had caught the vision of feminism through her own professional pilgrimage. She lived the many possibilities for women in her own life and in her bones.

Davida: Barbara was as earnestly committed to the empowerment of women as any of us upstart young feminists, but more mature and more prepared to recognize the inability of some to undergo the radical change we were calling for in the fast timeframe we younger women demanded. That she stayed in a caring and deep relationship with us and we with her is a testimony to her spirit as well as to God's!

²⁰ See Resource Section.

²¹ The Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree. From Friday April 28, 2006, 8:41 PM email.

She taught us all about how to make the structures of the church work for us instead of against us. Some of us adopted the roles of brash and abrasive advocate and others, tough analysts of the power dynamics in the church. She nurtured us along, urged us to grow in other capacities than our strengths, and looked for opportunities that would stretch us.

Norman Jackson: A New Hampshire meeting the summer of 1972 included all conference ministers and instrumentality executives. Barbara read some material to those executives that signaled, Okay, you guys, you've got to get with the inclusion of women or you are going to lose ground.²²

12. *Human liberation means just that: full personhood for all.*²³

Stop a moment. What were your feelings when you saw the announcement about this special issue? Were you amused? Or Puzzled? Angry? Disgusted? Interested? Or pleased?

If you experienced any of these feelings – or all of them – this issue is designed for you. Take a look at your responses . . . see if you can discover why you reacted as you did. Throughout this issue you will find quotations from famous people. You will certainly react to these with feeling. Now you may have some clue as to why we prepared this special issue for the women and men of the United Church of Christ.

In the weeks since a casual conversation with the editor of the HERALD ended in an invitation to serve as guest editor . . . , I have come to understand more clearly that the Good News of Jesus Christ is that all persons are precious and worthwhile. Freedom for women cannot be achieved apart from freedom for everyone. . . . Yet our culture – in which the church

²² At Pilgrim Place. February 23, 2006.

²³ From BWM Editorial. United Church Herald. January 1972, 9.

*shares the guilt – has oppressed women while declaring its belief in freedom for all.*²⁴

As part of editing this landmark Women and Society issue, Barbara wrote the editorial that won her in 1973 the UCC editorship of its successor magazine, A.D. That year she received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from her seminary.

Norman Jackson: I was one of three men on the Task Force. Then, as when she was editor, I found her equal to the task.²⁵

In 1975, A.D. ceased publication. Barbara enrolled in the Blanton Peale Institute (New York City) to train as a pastoral counselor. She felt that as a psychotherapist/pastoral counselor, she would be in "a better position to battle for human rights, and to help secure more victories for women in the church."²⁶



In 1978, she moved to Auburndale, Massachusetts, where she established a small pastoral counseling practice, particularly working with female seminarians – a new career at age 62. After traveling around the world and trekking in the Himalayas with three women friends, she moved to Pilgrim Place in Claremont, California, where she lived an active life from 1982 until illness slowed her.

13. Postlude. Prayer, in Barbara McCall's Words:



Too many are afraid to stop and face up to ourselves, for we would not be happy with what we might find. But for all who will take time apart from our life of action to meditate in solitude, there is a source of power never tapped by being of incessant speed.

"It is not within the physical strength of the ordinary person to go at a mad race all through life. . . . Though the world around us may be mad in its onward rush, we can be calm in the midst of it. We can face the world about us with true perspective, and treat [our neighbors] as brothers and sisters and not machines."²⁷

²⁴ Editorial.

²⁵ Interview at Pilgrim Place. February 23, 2006.

²⁶ From *Institutes Reporter*.

²⁷ Ordination Paper. 1938.

14. What About You?

- **What makes Barbara's words about prayer true today? Think about the "incessant speed" of your life?**
- **As you claim your faith, where are you in the natural process of doubting and questioning, of new and deeper thoughts?**
- **How does the ideal of Christ fit into your life?**
- **What do Barbara's decisions tell you about her priorities at each chapter of her career? What are your present priorities about marriage-career-family?**
- **Talk about differences between professional partnership/ team and competition. Between companion/life mate and team mate.**
- **Name some of the grounding values that shape your life.**

15. Church Family Project

Invite women in your church to visit about their life choices. Include stay-at-home moms; later life career women; those who have "done it all" all at once.

16. Still Curious?

- A.D. See BWM. "The decision to use inclusive language recommended by the Task Force on Women" (August, 1973, 41) and "The Pilgrim's Synod: Cause or Effect" (December 1973, 65). See A.D. indices for her other writing.
- "Barbara McCall's trek in the Himalayas." Concord (MA) Journal, 24 Dec 1981, 5.
- Friedan, Betty. The Feminine Mystique (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1997, 1991, 1974, 1963).
- "The Journey is Home: The Story of Nelle Morton," 29-minute video/study guide. How to 'do theology out of poverty'" (National Ecumenical Resource Centers, 804-358-8306)
- "Women's Week – Messenger of Good News" Issue, Common Lot, Winter, 2006, No. 106.
[Http://uccorg/women/commonlot.htm](http://uccorg/women/commonlot.htm)

Dallas (Dee) A. Brauning. *Antoinette Brown Women: Finding Voice*, August, 2007
