

**Celebrating the life
of
CENITH “CENNY” BELKEN**

Officer’s Gulch, CO

Saturday July 15th, 2023



Cenny as I knew her (by Larry Belken) - Part I



We met when I signed up for a Spanish class that the company that I was working for (MKI) sponsored them. The project was in a remote area of Colombia and so we lived in a large camp with over 5,000 men and on average 50 single women. These women lived in a separate area called the “Chicken Ranch” and were guarded by armed guards. We were not on good terms because I wouldn’t study very much and would skip classes to go play softball at night. It was only after MKI had stopped the Spanish classes and she started to work as a translator and office administrator that we became friends. My position allowed me to live in the best private quarters. On holidays, of which there were few, if a person with one of these quarters was leaving they would usually offer others with worse quarters to stay in their quarters. So when I left for a long weekend, Cenny was staying in camp, I let her stay in my A-2. The night I came back, she was in my A-2 and so we stayed talking and then one thing led to another and it was the start of something big. The love of my life. By the way, even though I tried many times during our lives together, I just couldn’t get the hang of it and never got above rudimentary Spanish.

She had a degree in languages, and she was good at it. Over the years she would become fluent in 4 languages; Spanish of course and English, French, and Hebrew, and could get along in Portuguese, Italian, and some Arabic. I was so proud of her for her ability.

She was a handful. She had to have it her way or the highway. I would have to pick my battles and compromise to get what I wanted or needed. But I loved her for that and much more about her. I would mock her and call her the General as she liked to give orders.

Cenny as I knew her (by Larry Belken) - Part II

When we were first married that we wouldn't go bed angry with each other and I don't think that we ever did. We had the ability to talk to each other and come up with a solution. A good working relationship that lasted through the years.

She was a fashionista and even if we were going to the drug store she would have to be dressed to the "nines" with her makeup on. Hats, scarfs, shoes and accessories were her thing and clothes were her thing and she wasn't a Walmart or Target kind of girl. She didn't care what it cost, if she wanted something she got it. Thank God she was like this even through her final days. Even for her last hospital visit for her transfusions the week before she passed, she was late trying to figure out what to wear.

Speaking of being late, she was late for almost everything. This drove me wild, as was the guy that had to be anywhere that we were going 5 minutes before the time. The ongoing joke between the two of us was that she would be late for her own funeral and she was. The stones that we were having made from her ashes, were supposed to be here long before today and they weren't. They will be ready before the end of July. So the rocks that are used today are a surrogate from my sister's landscaping.

She was a great teacher, a mentor, a rabid reader, but she was so proud of her ability to work with financial investments. She called herself an investilator and was self-taught starting this in the year of 2000. She was consumed with this new avenue in life and continued with this until she got to sick to do it anymore. She was passionate for sure.



Cenny as I knew her (by Larry Belken) - Part III

She was a matriarch to her family, helping financially to help them. School tuition, taxes on the farm, trips to Egypt for her family, etc. were always things that she would be sending money home. She has left me instructions to carry on helping the Polo family out, and I will.

She had an acute sense of smell. When I could smell nothing, she would always be commenting how much this or that smelled and what to do about it. I always joked with her that we needed to get her some type of treatment so that she could smell like a normal person.

She loved to travel and so we did:

- ❖ Egypt
- ❖ Greece
- ❖ Europe
- ❖ Kenya
- ❖ China
- ❖ Israel
- ❖ Turkey
- ❖ Korea
- ❖ South Africa
- ❖ Morocco

When we were in New York and yearning to go overseas again, I was offered a job in Egypt. She was thrilled to be going there. From childhood, she had always wanted to go there. She wasn't so thrilled after getting there, as it proved to be dirty, crowded, and worse smelly. One of the first nights she was in Alexandria, we were walking downtown and we came across a 13 or 14 year old boy beggar. After walking buy, Cenny wanted to give him some money so she went back with a pound and we she got close the boy exposed himself to her. Cenny was furious. That same night as we walked through the crowds, dirty men in gallabiyahs would rub themselves up against her. She was so pissed. Welcome to a good looking women in Egypt. Different culture for sure.



Cenny as I knew her (by Larry Belken) - Part IV

Her favorite trip was our safari to Kenya and all of the game parks. There was a group of 13 of us in 2 vans and we had a great time together. One day we were looking for lions high and low. Even the guides couldn't find any and then Cenny says there's a lion and everyone said that she was full of it. She wasn't – there was a beautiful male lion laying in waist-high grass underneath a tree. We got up close and took a picture and it became known as Cenny's lion. While recently going through everything, I found that picture and I had it blown up and framed. It brought back memories for sure.

One day while visiting an old friend in Wyoming I found Cenny and Danny shooting targets through Danny's kitchen window. Totally unexpected.

Once while visiting a high school friend's farm in Wisconsin, Steve was milking the cows and when he finished, he had to artificially inseminate a cow. Cenny wanted to experience this so she gloved up and proceeded to do the deep work while Steve took care of the other work. She was unpredictable.

Pirates – Cenny hated a certain bug that was brown, scampering and could survive a nuclear explosion. You couldn't use its real name, but she referred to it by calling them pirates. She freak out when she saw them, in Egypt, Florida, New York City, Sri Lanka, and Panama amongst other places she had to deal with them. She could handle poisonous snakes but not those guys.

- **Cheese in the luggage in Scotland.**
- **Fly over the Golden gate bridge for our wedding anniversary in 1997.**
- **She traveled heavy wherever she went. She always took way too much stuff.**
- **She loved to exercise and worked out almost every day.**
- **First time in the snow in Minneapolis. Snow angels and “oh, how pretty” from the room looking down on the top of the Holiday Inn.**
- **Her favorite book and movie was Gone with the Wind.**
- **Her (our) song was Africa by Toto.**
- **She loved to dance and party. They called her the Dancing Queen.**
- **She loved life and adventure. She would be so happy to see you all here, helping her Celebrate her life well lived.**



Tia Cenny's Unconditional Love (by Claudia Polo) - Part I



Hello everyone, my name is Claudia although some of you may know me as Claudia “Rosa”. In reality I don’t have a middle name, yet since I was born that was the name my aunt Cenny gave me. I don’t remember why she chose it, all I know is that it always felt right when she said it. I’m one of my aunt’s 27 nieces/nephews and I’m here representing the Polo family as unfortunately due to travel restrictions no one else could attend. Someone could think Aunt Cenny and uncle Larry never had children, however I don’t think that is accurate, because through their nieces and nephews, on both sides of the family, as well as their godchildren, they became the best parents ever.

My parents told me as a baby/toddler my aunt saw me a couple of times, yet it was only when I was 9 years old that I really remember knowing I had an aunt called Cenny. I was around the time my grandparents, aunt Maggi and cousins were going to visit them in Egypt, and I remember being so amazed I had an aunt who lived in Egypt and taught Spanish. I have to be honest I was a little jealous, but it was too late for me to join them on the trip. From that moment on, I would always ask my dad and aunts about her, always pressing when would we be able to see her in person. That dream came true in 1994 when she came to Colombia to visit the family and we were able to spend a few hours with her. I was amazed by her beauty, her straight hair and most of all her beautiful smile and joy she had every time she talked.

After Egypt it was always a bit of a mystery knowing where her and Larry were living so I started referring to her as my aunt “who lived somewhere in the world”. It was actually even fun to try and guess where she was living based on words my dad or aunts would pick up from conversations with her.

Fast forward to 1998 and as my High School graduation present my parents surprised me with the fact that I would be visiting aunt Cenny and uncle Larry in Folsom, California, and would be staying with them for one full month. I couldn’t believe it, I was so excited! I was only 16 and both of them welcomed me into their home like a daughter. It was one of the best summers of my life, we went to different places, a Broadway show, to play tennis, she attempted to teach me how to play golf, and shopping. It felt like home and I soaked in every moment of it. That was the last time I saw uncle Larry in person, although life would give me one more chance to see my aunt in person too.

In 2003 or 2004 I can’t recall, my aunt and I went to Colombia to visit the family again, and I told my parents I had to go to Barranquilla to see her. It was a short visit but I remember she still had that gorgeous smile, was super fashionable, and gave everyone as much attention as she could. I wish we had pictures from that visit.

Tia Cenny's Unconditional Love (by Claudia Polo) - Part II

As you can see, aunt Cenny and I only met in person a handful of times during her lifetime, yet throughout the years I felt she was closer than ever even if it was just through a phone call. Those calls that most of you know very well, when she would call and say "Claudia Rosa I only have 30 minutes to talk and we would spend 3-4 hrs jus talking". It didn't matter what I was doing, many times I would stop right there and there and take her call because I never new when the next one would come. At first it was only once a year and in the past few years it was more often.

If someone asked me how would I describe unconditional, selfless love, I would say the relationship we had was exactly that. I was never expecting anything from her and she was never expecting anything from me. She treated me like a daughter giving advice, asking about my life and being my confident. Her timing was impecable as she would call not knowing I could be going through rough times and she would always be the first to know. One of her biggest qualities was to always care about everyone, she would remember everything and somehow would find the time to reach out.

Aunt Cenny was always a very private person, during those phone calls she wanted to hear about us but seldom she would talk about her or her life.

And I learned to respect that, because one of the things that I most admire about her is that she lived her life the way she wanted, how she wanted it and next to the love of her life, uncle Larry. She never told us where she lived, and I always used to tell her I would come visit them wherever they went and that I wouldn't tell a soul, but she wanted to be fair with the rest of the family and I think this is why we didn't see her again.

I thank Larry for allowing me to see her one last time during her final hours and tell her how much we all loved her, and to give her peace of mind in knowing her life work of making sure her family was always taken care of would continue.

It is not easy to say goodbye, although I think it is more of a see you later. Because she is pretty much alive, in Larry, in her family, in her friends, in me. And the best way we have to honor her is to continue putting into practice everything she tried to teach us throughout the years. Every day I talk with her, and I can literally hear her voice in my head, and she is the one who gives me strength when I feel like giving up on something.

We love you tia Cenny, you have brought us back together and one day we will see each other again. Don't worry, uncle Larry will be in great hands with all of us.

Family is Everything (by Elizabeth Polo) Part I

My dear little sister, I finally sit down in front of this computer to write one of the most difficult farewells I could have done. How to express and link words that summarize everything you meant to me and to our whole family? How to express in a single word all the set of adjectives to describe your without leaving anything out? There is still not a day, not a moment, not an instant since your departure to heaven, that I can get you out of my mind. Every day so many memories come to my mind...

I remember that afternoon that you arrived at the farm, you came from the Minca school where you were studying in a boarding school, and that most of the time you were not with us; the big and little brothers and sisters who lived there (Judith, Alberto, David, Aida, Jesus, Daniel and I). It was only until that cold and rainy afternoon that I remember, everyone was very happy... Mom was so happy, she had ordered us to dress elegantly because the sisters from the city would come, the ones who were at school..., and that's when I remember you for the first time I saw you so pretty with your waist-length black hair, your petite face and freckles; you were wearing a below the knees gray skirt that was tight to the body. These skirts were the last cry of fashion and they called them "HALF STEP", before that I really don't remember you, I only knew that I had two other sisters named Margarita and Cenith who were at school. I remember that Aida and I did not separate for a moment from you, we wanted to know everything, we wanted to be right there and I, as always, asked about everything. When it stopped raining that same afternoon you took us to the old house where we were born and we played soccer there. Really for us everything was a party, they gave us sweets and cookies as gifts, needless to say that this was a paradise of delights for our palates, well, Due to the distance from the mountain, we almost never enjoyed these sweets.



Family is Everything (by Elizabeth Polo) Part II

Little sister of my heart, all this is fascinating and even more knowing that your mind was prepared to make your dreams come true from an early age, regardless of the economic limitations that the moment imposed on us. You calculated everything, even when a boy came up to bother us and we in our innocence told you to look at him because he was cute and you said.... “Do you think that I can travel around the world with him?” And you frowned. Incredibly, you always prepared yourself so that everything you thought and dreamed of would come true. In my childhood and adolescence we lived together for a short time, but the attention you gave us was so much that it was almost never noticed, it was as if you were always there, by our side. When you went to study high school in Barranquilla, and you visited us at the farm, you would take magazines and photos of the latest fashion statement. For us that was fascinating, those colors, those fashions captivated us and we were satisfied with the promise that one day you and Maguita would buy them for us. In those short vacations that we spent with you at night, in the middle of the darkness of the mountains, gathered around the table lit by a gas lamp, the will tell jokes, anecdotes and organized ideas that would help us get out of the poverty.

Back in Cienaga, I remember those moments of joy, of partying and going to carnival, where you were always the center of attention with your spectacular way of dressing and moving your whole body to the rhythm of Caribbean music. How not to remember your laughter and your big smile. There were also some difficult moments you faced while living in Barranquilla, but they only give you more strength to move forward and ensure no one from your family would suffer. You never focused on the defeats, these, on the contrary, catapulted you to a better world.

Despite the circumstances, everything seemed to be going in the direction you wanted. Entering the University was not easy, but with your enthusiasm and tenacity you took it to the end. My father and my mother were your pillar, your support, your love. You loved dad so madly that he was proud to have a daughter like you. My mother for you was pure tenderness, with her loving voice of hers, she managed to make you please her in some things that she wanted, you loved to make her happy.

Family is Everything (by Elizabeth Polo) Part III



You managed to become a brilliant teacher, but you still continued with your plans to travel around the world. I remember as if it were yesterday everything you fought to get into the Cerrejon, there was your focus, your attention, your goal!!! And there didn't only include how you were going to do it... there was also... your Larry... your better half, your husband. I remember that after a while you decided to tell us that you had a boyfriend... and his name was Larry... he was a "gringo" and you were in love, everyone in the house was very happy. With your work at Cerrejon, you obtained achievements that helped you improve your economic well-being and also ours. And from there our dear Larry took you to fly, and you flew and you flew through all those countries and places that you named as a child, and you sent us the photos you promised. You did it honey!!!!, and you managed to share so many things with everyone... you shared a great adventure trip to Egypt with dad, mom, Magui, Didier, Yuri and Andres Camilo; dad's excitement and joy lasted until the day of his death. They came back so happy and described in detail each place and each city they visited, until they made us feel part of that trip. They appreciated the care, kindness and love both from you and from our Larry.

Incredibly you dedicated yourself to the education of some brothers and nephews... that was the best legacy you could leave. How proud you were of Didier, (Electronic Engineer), Luis Felipe (Systems Engineer), Paula Andrea (Doctor), Alejandra (Public Administrator), Jesus David (Business Administrator), Juan Leonardo (International Business Administrator), Andres Camilo (Bachelor of Modern Languages like you were). You helped everyone with our children when the burdens became heavy and difficult to carry. Thank you darling, therefore, for your dedication to this extended family, for elementary and High school education for the girls Sofia and Maria Sofia, daughters of your beloved nephew and godson Yuri Alahin. Thank you for so much help, attention and support to me, my husband and my sons Carlos Andres and Marco Antonio.

Family is Everything (by Elizabeth Polo) Part IV

Thank you for taking care of so many details, thank you for enjoying life and for being our mentor, our direction. Thank you for so much support for our dreams and endeavors, for always being there with a word of encouragement, thank you for so much simplicity and humility. Thank you for so many second chances you gave us; When we failed in the first one, you said that the second chances were better than the first ones because the experience was already there, but yes, thanks for the scolding and conditions that you placed for those second chances, without judging us, much less, without humiliating us.

I don't know when I should say goodbye, or see you soon, because undoubtedly these departures are inevitable and sooner or later we will be there, together with dad and mom and with all those who have gone before.

We could not touch you, nor look into your eyes, much less hug you for 19 short years.... They were short... Because I never felt them... I only realized that you had not returned when my children claimed not to know you and yet they loved you madly. You leave us everything about you... you will always be there among us... between Angel, Judi, Ito, Magui, Alberto, David, Aida, Jesu, Daniel and me, your sisters-in-law and nephews/nephews in-laws Zorayda, Mayuris, Edilsa, Angie, Katia, Carlos, Ricaurte, Ivanov, Ivan, Torsten, Kevin, Johanna, Carola, Nazly and Ramon.

And you will always be among so many nephews and nieces, among many... Your beloved Claudia Rosa and Dean, even though "Rosa" is nowhere in her name, that's how you always called her, Didier and Lucia, Yuri, Andres Camilo, Carlos Andres, Marco Antonio, Paula Andrea, Angela, Luke and Owen, Joel, Dilan and Maria Cristina, Julio, Angie and Laura, William, Ernesto, Juan, Alberto Enrique, Javier, Angelica, Maria Sofia and Juan Angel, Luis Felipe and Cristina Isabel, Jesus David, Juan Leonardo, Ennio, Yesica, Brayan, Cristian and Johan Jaime, Arquimedes, Mery and Carlos Mario, Barbara, Estefany and Esteban, Alejandra, Gerson Moises and Daniel. Not to mention those you practically considered your granddaughters, Maria Sofia, Sofia Valentina, Samantha, Alana and Maria Paula, who was born after you left. I know that you will also always be with your only Colombian goddaughter, Omaira.

Goodbye my darling, little sister of my heart, I miss you so much, so much.... How much I will and we all will miss... those long calls, three or four hours giving instructions, talking and fixing everything, advising us, talking about books and food... to have a better way of life. Thank you for leaving us Larry, that beautiful husband of your... That you loved so much... your "muñequito" or "little doll" as you would refer to him. Thank you because we know that he is infused with you, your skin, your aroma. I hope that soon we can hug him, because hugging him is hugging you too.

I love you with all my soul. Always yours, Eli.

An Ode to Cenny (by Katy Robertson, read by Patty Remus)

Once upon a time a wonderful Colombian lass came into many lives!

Cenny was her name and she was all game!

A friend, a companion a godmother and wife....

Heck!! no there was never any strife!

Cenny stood for integrity and fun and loyalty and honor.... There just was no one else like her to ponder.

Belkens and Robertsons met many years back across the globe in very interesting sites....jobs in Egypt , Israel, Sri Lanka and Panama to name a fewCenny fit into the mold as wives do.

She became life long in a friendship with our son and his wife... work for the husbands and gatherings became a way of life..... Larry and Cenny and Rick and Renée spent many an hour together planning meals and excursions after the work day, of course!

Cenny had spunk, Cenny was bright....when she entered a room it felt like she turned up the light. Cenny had warmth, Cenny had spirit! That wasn't a surprise....it was fact and we knew it!

When we traveled to cities that followed Larry and Rick's work, Cenny would greet us with open arms and a perk!

No matter where the Belkens landed. Cenny would whip out her computer to join in with her talents creating a legacy for some of her clients.

The Belkens and Robertsons had many great adventures! Nick and I were lucky to join in on the ventures!

Cenny loved our grandchildren as if they were her own. Rylee and Raegan grew up knowing this Queen on the throne!

There was one little quirk that Cenny would hide.... It was CRITTERS that lurked in dark places (oh my!!) She wouldn't say the word that could describe their awfulness. She would simply find help to exterminate their "presentness"!

The lovely Cenny made us laugh and then cry. We were so saddened to hear her health slipped on by.

This woman of kindness brought joy to us all! The twinkle in her eyes, her laughter and her voice made our world so much better and it was by choice.



A Prayer for Cenny

(by Jan Weisensale)

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for us all together in this beautiful area to celebrate Cenny's Life.

Keep our memories of her fresh in our minds as we travel home.

God bless you Cenny

Amen

