



My Heart and Soul Belongs to ElderCollege

by

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“My heart and soul has been in ElderCollege ever since I joined the Vintage Players when I first moved to Reno,” said JoAnn Ballard. “But now my heart is torn.”

JoAnn referred to the fact that her daughter, Carolyn, who owns Nevada’s Quality Thrift in addition to holding down a full-time job at the Eldorado, needs help running her store. Even ElderCollege cannot compete with the love one has for one’s child.

So, JoAnn, who is Hospitality Chair for ElderCollege and facilitates Books, Spiritual and Psychological, must now try to balance her two loves.

Five years ago JoAnn arrived in Reno to visit her daughter, Carolyn. She looked at the beautiful brown hills surrounding Reno. They seemed like welcoming arms around her and she knew she had found home for the first time since her husband left with his secretary.

This unexpected disaster left her bewildered. Welfare refused to help. Even though she was abandoned with five small children, she was still married. She went to her church. They gave her \$5.00 and a roll of toilet paper. This insensitive treatment from her government and her church turned her away from religion to a serious study of spirituality.

She was finally forced to divorce so welfare would help her. The next two years she was unable to sleep because she was certain she was going to hell for divorcing her cheating husband in order to feed her children.

Her spiritual quest continues. She ran across a book, “Tibetan Book of the Dead,” that proved to be her turning point.

All JoAnn remembers of her childhood was that her mother was seldom there and her father raised her and her four siblings – the rest of her youthful years she has shut out completely.

“I wanted to be an actress but I couldn’t remember lines. I was too used to shutting things out,” JoAnn said. “Besides, I discovered I was more interested in the social life being with actors rather than working at acting.”

“I hope my family and friends remember me as ‘a giver’ because I’m happiest when I’m giving. I’m not really good at receiving,” Jo Ann explained as she continued stitching on one of the quilts for sale in the shop.

“I have no secrets. Everybody knows everything about me because I tell everything,” JoAnn said.

“I had no discipline of any kind in my life and I am amazed and proud to have such wonderful, well-behaved children.”