

## Mariah Fenton Gladis '61

Gestalt Psychotherapist

For those who claim there are limits to our dreams, meet Mariah Fenton Gladis, MSS, QCSW.



Ron and Mariah Fenton Gladis.

Mariah '61, a proud RSHC "lifer" and 1965 graduate of the former Rosemont School of the Holy Child High School, is an honored Gestalt psychotherapist who has practiced for more than 37 years. The founder of the Pennsylvania Gestalt Center for Psychotherapy and Training, she is an internationally renowned workshop trainer, leader, and motivational speaker.

And one who continues to beat the odds each and every day. Mariah has amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a paralyzing, degenerative neurological disease. Upon her diagnosis, Mariah was told she likely would live only

two more years. That was 33 years ago.

On that day, she was to become engaged to boyfriend Ron Gladis. "I completely understand if you don't want to go through with this," she told him.

"We have a life to live," Ron countered.

Theirs is a love story for the ages. Ron, who runs her practice and the Mariah Fenton Gladis Foundation, is her constant companion and caregiver. They have two sons, Luke, 32, a project executive in the Washington, DC metro area, and Cole, 30, a filmmaker in Los Angeles.

Mariah grew up in Rosemont, an only child who early on was the emotional support for her divorced mother. Rosemont School provided Mariah's respite. "I needed the protection of this small, caring community," she said. Mariah credits the Sisters, particularly Sr. Polly McShain, SHCJ, for creating a lifelong experience that "was loving and nurturing and inspiring."

"My experience at Holy Child has been absolutely foundational,"



MALVERN, PA

Mariah added during an interview in her Malvern home. "The

values and morals I learned there have guided me to this day. I had tremendous support there and a lot of love."

Mariah has made the most of it. She has office hours four days a week and still travels to conferences. Mariah has received multiple professional awards during her remarkable career, which she recounted in a revealing book, *Tales of a Wounded Healer*. A documentary of her life, *Mariah*, is being produced by son, Cole, with an expected release this year.

When asked to explain her success, Mariah said, "I think I'm naturally intuitive. I think I was born to do this. I have an ability to see what's possible for people who sometimes cannot see it for themselves."

However, when asked to name her greatest achievement, Mariah said promptly, "My family. Hands down."

Her regimen includes aggressive physical therapy, vitamin supplements, and a strict organic diet, but Mariah has no explanation for how uncommonly she has met her physical challenges. "It's a miracle, really. There are people that did everything right and didn't survive," Mariah said.

"Having a full life is not only normal for me, it's essential," she said, "and I want to do as much as I can while I'm on the earth ... so that at the end I know I was useful. I love being of service and living an exciting, meaningful life."

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For example, Mariah - against the advice of her children - cheerfully took the Ice Bucket Challenge last year to help raise awareness for ALS research. Ron gamely followed suit.

Her Holy Child education instilled in her, Mariah said, "a belief that miracles do happen and that grace is bestowed every day."

"So I have not given up on the idea that a cure or treatment for ALS may happen in my life." ✦