

I'd like to share a poem with you this morning. It comes from a collection of Childcraft books Mom had as a child. When we would get together every couple of weeks recently we would sit together on her sofa and happily leaf through the pages. I think they stirred happy memories for both of us. One particular favorite is entitled simply Daisies, by Frank Dempster Sherman. And because Mom love daisies, and because we loved Mom, I would like to share it with you today.

Daisies

At evening when I go to bed

I see the stars shine overhead;

They are the little daisies white

That dot the meadow of the night.

And often while I'm dreaming so,

Across the sky the moon will go:

It is a lady, sweet and fair,

Who comes to gather daisies there.

For, when at morning I arise,

There's not a star left in the skies;

She's picked them all and dropped them down

Into the meadows of the town.

It's been nearly two months since our Mother passed away and I find myself thinking of her every day.

I see a bird at the feeder and I think of her. I see a couple holding hands and I think of her and Dad. Just this past week I was at the nursery amidst the vast array of colorful flowers, daisies, and garden plants and I suddenly I am back on Sand Ridge road, digging potatoes, picking and eating from the abundant supply of raspberries, searching and finding a zucchini hiding beneath the vines.

I had the constant supportive and loving presence of my mother in my life for almost 63 years. The memories are endless, describable and indescribable, mostly happy, but sometimes sad, some really funny, some not so much, some barely within my mind's reach and others vivid as the sky is blue on a bright spring day.

You are here because you knew my mother, most likely quite well. Some of you like Lynn Long and Lois Hiltner knew her for over 65 years. Others of you knew her far more briefly. What can I tell you that you don't already know? What can I say that will honor her, honor your friendship with her, honor her life as a granddaughter, daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, student, teacher, friend, civic minded

citizen, advocate for the environment, charitable spirit, disciple of Jesus Christ, and a true and transparent witness to her faith.

It seems most appropriate that I just share a little bit of what's been on mind these last couple of weeks regarding Mom. First and foremost, we grew up in a home where we felt loved and safe to be ourselves and pursue our own interests and dreams. Mom loved and led us by example, by walking the walk. Perhaps more than any other person that I know and she walked the walk with strength, a fierce determination, and a conviction of spirit. Dick and I had our small grandson with us a couple weekends ago. I was entertaining him, or perhaps he was entertaining me, but we were "singing" the Hokey Pokey. Put your one hand in; take your one hand out. Put your two hands in; take your two hands out. Put your whole self in.... and suddenly I thought of Mom. I can't explain it but I thought of Mom. With her there was no one hand in, one hand out. She put her whole self in her entire life.

I have very few memories of Mom sitting down. She was always up and doing, from morning until night, putting her whole self in at whatever it was at that stage, at that moment in her life that required her attention. Oh she did sit down of course. She sat at my musical programs, Brian's football games, Steve's debates and tennis matches. She sat down to study calculus when she was working on her master's degree. She sat down when she poured over the Triple A books planning cross country family vacations that I came to realize as I got older, were experiences that most children only dream of.

Most of my memories of Mom include my Dad. It really is rather hard to separate the two. They did almost everything together and they started every morning with a big sloppy kiss. They raised their children as a forceful, loving, united front. They vacationed together, always with us, at least until we left home. They gardened together, walked and rode bikes together, sang and danced together, dreamed together, attended programs together, ministered to those that needed their love and support together, and worshiped and prayed together. They were a team my mom and dad in every sense of the word.

Mom's world changed when Dad got sick and died three months later. For a moment in time she was lost, it was too much. On the day of Dad's 90th birthday drive by celebration, hosted by their beloved St. Marks friends, a family in a van stopped in front of the driveway, got out and left a beautiful arrangement of tulips. And inside that arrangement was tucked a small wooden sign that said, Be Strong and Courageous. Joshua 1:6 I'll likely never know for whom that was intended, Dad, or Mom, or perhaps all of us. All her life Mom had been strong and courageous. She went away to college at Duke University; she married a man very different from her in background. She gave birth to her first child seven weeks prematurely in a German hospital without her husband nearby, surrounded by doctors and nurses that spoke only German. Dad was serving in the Army and stationed in Frankfurt. She lost her mother quite unexpectedly and way too early. She raised three children, one particularly active and spirited. She went back to school and earned an advanced degree and was recognized by the state of Ohio as science teacher of the year. In particular two very specific examples of her courage and strength stay with me.

When I was 5 or 6 years old I was enthusiastically jumping on the sofa at the fraternity house at the University of New Hampshire where we were staying for the summer while Dad taught summer school. It was the 4th of July and I was getting a head start on the celebration. Somehow my usual good balance and footing gave way and unexpectedly the coffee table found itself colliding with my head! There was blood. A lot of blood. And then a trip to the emergency room and the thrashing wailing 5 year old child wrapped in a blanket was more than the emergency room doctor could handle. And so my mom, remember the strong and courageous part, she proceeded to shave and stitch the back of my head. Thank you Mom. I stand here before everyone today as a testament to your strength and courage.

The other occasion, almost 60 years later, is one of those memories clear as the spring day's blue sky. I was dropping Mom off at Otterbein Skilled nursing. She had been in the Toledo hospital for a week just 10 days prior, totally unresponsive. We were just shy of 3 months into the CoVid shutdown. Dad had died a few days earlier and she was weak and in a wheel chair unable to walk. I had packed her things and was required to literally drop her off at the door. I was a mess. I was crying, and the nurses accepting her into Otterbein's care were crying too. Mom looked at me as I knelt down in front of her wheel chair and reached out and laid her hand on my head and said, "Don't cry Annie, I'll be okay. Don't cry."

And she was... okay. A week later she was walking and moving into an Independent Living Apartment. Soon she was delivering papers to new neighbors, walking in the woods, playing bridge, cooking her meals, going to exercise class, attending programs. On her dresser, alongside her favorite picture of my Dad, she kept the small wooden sign, Be Strong and Courageous. Joshua 1:6 Small in size, but bigger than life,... Sue Rock. John Wayne may have been a movie star, but YOU had True Grit.

I miss you. Steve and Brian miss you. You are everywhere, but not in the way to which I am accustomed. I see something, smell something, hear something, and for a split second while my mind catches up with my heart, I have the impulse to want to share it with you. I can't see you or hear you, or talk to you any longer in the ways that I am accustomed. And yet, it's like Frank Sinatra's song, "I'll Be Seeing You." In all the Old Familiar Places...

I'll be seeing you every summer's day. In everything that's light and gay. I'll always think of you that way. I'll find you in the morning sun, and when the night is new. I'll be looking at the moon, but I'll be seeing you."