

As you all know, my mother was a very accomplished person, professionally, and she was very active in the local community, engaging in a variety of volunteer activities. She was extremely smart. She was also the worst speller of any really smart person I have ever known, something that didn't seem to bother her, but which the rest of her family found to be a source of some amusement.

When I was growing up, Mom was a stay-at-home mother. She didn't go back to school and begin her career in education until after I had gone off to college. She, along with Norma Best and Mary Pfouts, helped organize ice cream socials at Crim Elementary School for years. When I got a little older, she drove me to and from countless athletics practices, chorus rehearsals, and band rehearsals. She attended most if not all of my performances. Mom was a fine cook, and while she occasionally would serve cheese soufflé or liver and onions – dishes that I detested – she generally catered to the tastes of her husband and children. Though small, she was tough and wiry, and she would occasionally join us in backyard softball games or other sports.

Mom was the emotional anchor of our family. My dad was a wonderful human being and a great father in very many respects, but he had a short fuse and a loud voice. Mom was understated and steady. She was a Rock in more than just her name. I don't think I ever saw her rattled, and I can't recall her really raising her voice. She didn't demand respect, but she commanded it, nonetheless, by her words and her actions. She wasn't afraid to mete out discipline, but she did so calmly, with a clear explanation of how one's behavior had fallen short and how it needed to be improved. Mom was always there to bandage a boo-boo or provide a shoulder to cry on. She was forever encouraging us in our endeavors and expressing pride in our accomplishments. Perhaps most importantly, she loved our father, and the stability of their marriage was both a source of comfort and confidence in my formative years and a model to be emulated in my later ones.

As an adult, I treasured the times spent with my mother. It wasn't just that I loved her, although I did. She was a genuinely interesting person, in large part because she was so fascinated by and invested in the world around her. She had a keen interest in politics and a deep commitment to economic and social justice. She was an ardent outdoorswoman and environmentalist, and she loved hikes as well as walks around the neighborhood. On such walks, she typically set a blistering pace, and it was not until she was more than 80 years old that I could comfortably keep up with her. Her knowledge of plant life – from the humblest flowers to the grandest trees -- was encyclopedic. She adored gardening, and when we lived on Sand Ridge Road, spent countless hours tending everything from sweet corn to peas. Like my father, she had great difficulty sitting still for any length of time. When my parents would come to visit my family, they would invariably end up in the yard, picking up sticks, clearing leaves out of the flower beds, trimming shrubs, and performing a variety of other tasks that I lacked either the time or the inclination – or both – to undertake myself. For a while I worried that this meant they thought I was lazy, but I eventually came to realize that it wasn't about me, it was about them: They simply couldn't help themselves.

The roughly 21 months of my mother's life after my father died in May of 2020 were not happy ones. In addition to losing my dad, to whom she had been married for nearly 65 years, she had to leave the home they had shared for the preceding decade and a half, and the pandemic worsened her social isolation. But she never succumbed to self-pity, and she was buoyed by frequent visits from my brother and sister, and by less frequent visits from me. She stubbornly refused to use a walker, and she continued to take walks, ride her exercise bike, read novels, work crossword puzzles, and piece together jigsaw puzzles until almost the very end. One of my fondest memories is of taking her to the Pemberville Opera House this past January to see a silent Buster Keaton film. She thoroughly enjoyed the movie, and it was wonderful to share some laughs with her. By the time I was able to return in early March, her health had deteriorated markedly, but I was fortunate to be able to spend the last 10 days of her life with her, in the company of my brother and sister, with occasional visits from dear friends like Lyn Long and Sue Potter.

My mother was a modest woman who was not one to call attention to herself. She was small in stature, standing barely 5 feet tall and weighing maybe 110 pounds. But Shakespeare's description of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* applied to her: "Though she was but little, she was fierce." My little, but quietly fierce, tenacious mother had an enormous impact on those around her: her friends, her students, her fellow educators, her church, members of the local community, and, above all, her family. The world is a much poorer place without her in it, but it is also a much better place for her having been here. I will be forever grateful to have been her son. Thank you.