

I didn't know how to summarize Grandma's 81 years into just a few minutes. I have struggled to find words that do justice to all that she was to all of us. How can I make such an amazing person into a few lines on a page? I hope everyone understands that whatever is said about her today, it was never going to be enough.

Grandma always spoke fondly of her mother and siblings, and her years growing up in St Cloud. In those years she learned how to share, how to sing, how to love. She told a story of how she and her sisters would babysit then bring home the \$.25-.30 they had earned and put it at their mother's bedside, so she could use it to buy food for the family the next day. She was proud to have shared what she could. I can picture Grandma's hands held to her chest, shoulders shrugged, shuffling around singing; she would open one hand as she hit a higher note. Grandma was always humming a tune that she knew some of the words to, and she would sing "if only Rosy or Katy were here to help with the next line....." Her favorite gift, I think, was the unconditional love she learned from her mother. Grandma told me a couple years ago that she hoped she had lived her life like her own mother had lived hers. She said, "mom was full of goodness. She didn't have to talk about it, we just knew she was good. We followed our mom's goodness all our lives." She said she didn't remember her complaining about her lot in life, she just tried to love everything as best she could. As I recall Grandma speaking those words, I know her mother would be proud and I know her husband, children and grandchildren find that description perfectly suited to her as well.

Grandma's greatest joy in life came from being a wife, a mother and a grandmother. She would proudly tell the story of how Grandpa pointed to her across a room and proclaimed, "there is the girl I'm going to marry." She loved having a house full of children, and as a grandchild, I loved hearing her retell the tales of our parents with fondness. And we always knew she held the memory of Mary Margaret close to her heart. I asked Grandma if she thought she did a good job being a mother and grandmother. She said, "I think I'm a good at it, because I make time for everyone of my kids and grandkids." And she did make time for all of us. We all cherish the memories of bellying up to the kitchen table, taking turns pouring ingredients for cookies, or stirring the dough. We have all been dealt several hands of Rummy, Shanghai, and Kings in the Corner. We've all gone shopping at Crazy Days with Gram. We've all stood on a chair drying the dishes she was washing. We'd all gladly spend any opportunity afforded us with her.

Grandma had a charisma, an energy of kindness, that is seldom found. She approached everyone without judgement and brought out the good in all. Her compassion and sense of humor resonated with all that knew her. She wasn't afraid to be silly and laugh at herself. I always smiled when Gram would give someone a pinch or call them a "jerk." She turned strangers into friends everyday, and sometimes, this was embarrassing. You never knew who you'd find Gram off making friends with. But as an adult I can see the value in her way. Although she was a humble person, she earned a place in everyone's heart that made her a character larger than life.

Grandma loved the Lord and lived her life for the day she would be with Jesus. She said the Bible had a lot of good philosophy in it and it made perfect sense to follow it. She lived charitably and gave more than requested of her, including money. At least once she was told, "mom, some of these people don't need this money." She would shake her head and say, "then they'll have to take it up with the Lord." Her faith was unshakeable and she believed in our Lord

with all that she was. We have all known from a young age that Grandma did not fear death, but instead rejoiced in the time she would go to be with the Lord. I remember the grief when Tom died, wondering why it seemed Grandma cried so little compared to everyone else. She said she had to rejoice, "Tom is now with the Lord." I told her once that I hoped she would live forever. She said, "oh, don't wish that on me. There will be a time when I won't know the people I love here on earth anymore. That will be the time when all of you should pray for me to leave this world and go on to something even more glorious." Last week we prayed like never before.

Finally, the love Grandma gave always made you feel that you were special. As LaVonne pointed out last night, Matt gave nicknames to his mom and grandmother that represent what they are to him. Patty is "boss," grandma was "love." She embodied the word. For all the love Grandma had for her family, friends and strangers and all the love that we returned, in the last few years we had grown accustomed to hearing her say, "always love me, promise to always love me." It may have been her fear that as the Alzheimer's took over, she would no longer know to tell us she loved us, or maybe we would forget how we loved her. That was never a possibility.

To end my father's last visit with his mother he hugged her and said, "love you mum." Her response, "I love you too, and love is the most important thing." For me, if there is only one memory to hold onto, it will be the ever-present, unconditional love we all felt in her presence. It was her greatest gift to us all. PRAISE THE LORD!!!