

Tiny Hero Warrior



When my life was getting away from me in my early 20s, my mother sent me a plaque that made quite an impression on me. It remains hanging in my house today. It read, “Your life is a gift from God. What you make of it is your gift to God.”

Today let me tell you about the gift that was my mom’s life. My mom was an incredibly kind and generous woman who treated everyone like a friend. To those in need she helped. To those alone she befriended. When someone needed confidence, she was encouraging. Perhaps the only one mom never made time for was the door to door Fuller Brush Man. Afterward, she’d usually feel guilty for giving a flimsy excuse not to hear his sales pitch.

Mom had several passions, one of which was gardening. There is a certain poetry to having mom’s memorial mass the week following the Buffalo Garden Walk. If this celebration was last weekend, I think we’d have to wrap up early so she could get to look at those gardens! My mother loved to garden and to visit gardens. I suppose that, in addition to growing and nurturing life, it appealed to her love of nature’s elegance. Her gardens were always colorful, designed to attract butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. I marveled at her incredible endurance. She may have been tiny in stature but she was a dynamo in the garden; digging, tilling, planting for hours, all to enhance the beauty of nature.



As nature includes animals, you cannot think of mom without remembering her extreme love of cats. If you ever needed to brighten her day, a cat video did the trick. Mom rescued many strays. She was a huge supporter of the SPCA. And her cats adored her. Her last two, Pico de Gato and Dylan, kept vigil at her side until she passed.

Music played a major role throughout mom's life. As a young girl, she sang on the radio. As a young mother, she sang Joni Mitchell to Lynn and me. She took us to concerts and musicals as kids and that continued until her last year. And mom always loved hearing the Blessed Sacrament choirs. Perhaps all this led her to open a music store, New World Record, with her friend Go. Mom knew music. She was so happy at the store introducing people to new music or hearing recommendations from her customers, many of whom became friends. Years later I'd meet people who told me how much they liked mom and were influenced by her. I always used to brag to my friends that my mom knew everything about music. But I don't think she'd mind if I told y'all that she once claimed that the song "Blinded Me With Science" would become the "Stairway to Heaven" of New Wave music. Hey, even the greats miss once!

Mom loved family. Whether going to family picnics in the countryside in the 50s and 60s, to Sunday dinners at her parents, to her cousin lunches, to the many vacations she took with family, I believe that is when she was happiest. Lynn and I were blessed with her immense love, guidance and generosity. And I was very fortunate that she'd visit me often in Austin. Mom and her granddaughter Jessica shared a very special bond. They went on some great vacations together, one of which was to France and England. While in London mom HAD to visit Abbey Road. There was a graffiti wall in front of Apple Studios where



fans left messages. I remember mom writing the John Lennon quote “life is what happens when you are busy making other plans” on the wall.

Fast forward about 19 years and we’d been discussing some vacation ideas. Then came the cancer diagnosis in June 2019 and so “other plans” were put on hold. Mom faced her cancer with extreme courage and grace. She was determined to win. I dubbed her our Tiny Hero Warrior. On Christmas 2019, she proudly wore a shirt that read “Though she be little, she is fierce”. Setbacks ensued and by March it was just too much to overcome. I flew up when she decided to end treatment. One night she went up to bed and I was helping her. She turned and said softly and sadly, “I’m so sorry. I’m not the Tiny Hero Warrior anymore”..... That’s not true, mom. You can be heroic even in defeat. You are always our hero.



Over the next few weeks mom got weaker and she fell on three occasions. It was coming upon Easter. I thought of Jesus falling three times on his way to Calvary. For my mother, cancer was her cross to bear. My mom died 4 weeks after Easter, on Mother’s Day. She lived her life in a way that was truly a great gift to God. In doing so she reminded me what is important, just like when she sent me the plaque years ago. I hope to honor my mom with that same gift to God in my life.

Mom is gone now but please keep her in your hearts for a while. When you see a beautiful flower, think of mom.
When you hear Joni Mitchell, think of mom.
When you see a cat video, think of mom.
When you see the LOVE sculpture, think of mom.

Thank you, mom, for your gift to God and to all of us.

To all of you, on behalf of her family, thank you for being in her life.