

# THANKS, MOM

It's a sad, but not uncommon reality that we often get to know and appreciate people even more after they are gone. This will be my first Mother's Day without my mom who died last May 18 and I find myself thinking about her and what it was like for her to be my mother.

Though I've been told I was a sweet solicitous big sister at two offering infant Karen my shoes "Baby got no shoes," I was quite a handful as I got older. I remember when I was about 10, putting my hands on my hips and telling my mom, "If it makes you feel better to think you are right, go ahead. But I know you are wrong." We didn't have much money when I was growing up, so Mom sewed me two dresses for grade school graduation. They were beautiful, but I didn't want to wear them—I wanted something from the store like other girls had—and I told her so. She loved me anyway. I wish I had those dresses and could wear them now. One was a pink and white plaid; the other, yellow with flowers.

Mom had other struggles, too. She had high risk pregnancies and after my brother John was born, she was advised to not get pregnant. But along came my sister Julie who was born six weeks early. I didn't realize how difficult that was until my own daughter had premature twins. Mom buried my younger sister when Karen was only 32 and had two young sons. I can't imagine the grief she must have felt. She had a life-long battle with lupus, survived cancer, lost her eyesight to macular degeneration, became a widow, losing the love of her life, and spent her final years in a nursing home because of a broken hip that would not heal. Her love of God and spirit prevailed until she died. Her blessing us by making the sign of the cross on our foreheads was a life-long parting ritual even to her final days.



In her era, women had few options and accepted whatever life dealt them. The top student in her graduating class, she wanted to go to nursing school, but had to put those plans aside because her dad had died and she had to help support her mother. She did what was before her—no questions asked. That's how it was.

Though she herself never graduated from college, she edited my dad's papers and supported his desire for education for the 31 years it took for him to get a degree going part time. She was in the background cheering all of us on. We couldn't have done it without her.

I wish I could have known her even better, but she still continues to reveal herself to me through things she left behind. I see her excitement in being a mother in a picture of her holding a squirming me as an infant. I understand her deep love of Dad in her engagement ring that I got in her will. I've saved a hand-sewn smocked white flowered dress she made for my daughter Sara for a future grand-daughter. My twin grandsons enjoy the alphabet wall hanging with items lovingly hand-stitched for each letter. And there are the glimpses of her spirit at work in the ways I parented and am a grandma.

Unlike my mother, I've had many career opportunities outside the home. I've been a reporter, worked in public relations, was a high school teacher, was a counselor with alcoholics and addicts, had a private counseling practice, worked with troubled children, and am now pastoral associate at St. Leo's, But like her, I believe the most important and satisfying career I've ever had is being a mother. Nothing else can compare. Thanks, Mom.

- Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate