

## A Love Letter to My Mother

Dear Mom:

It's been over 10 years since I last heard your voice. A voice I had heard from every day over a period of 50 years prior to the time of your accident and consequent passing. I had a cushy life. The person I enjoyed most was always there for me. We could gossip about anything, argue about most things, laugh and share the many twists and turns that came our way-well to be honest, that came mostly my way, and ultimately, face the world together.

There was John, David, August, Lufti, Job 1-2-3 and maybe 4, sisters A&B, and the kids, sis's 3 boys who all jostled for position as the very favorite-a choice you never made clear.

Most fun was knowing I always had someone on my side to be there when my life was cheery and when I felt abandoned. What a special grace not to have to translate anything I said so you'd understand me or to need to be a certain way to be accepted.

Who needed friends? I had them but you were always there to see me thru. A soul I could completely trust. Now that was a miracle gift.

My memories include our many adventures and trips we took together, local travel and overseas. I'd drag us off to pick strawberries, see psychics, see a play, opening night of the opera and symphony, beach visits, mountain visits, national parks, the zoo; I have trouble thinking of places and things we didn't do together-festivities, holidays, birthdays, holy days, parades, fairs, the mall, Weight Watchers (you did well, I gained 20 pounds!).

Now I come to my time today. Growing old (older) alone is no joke. Anyone can tell you that. It's a time of reflection, change, reduced activity, and yes- loneliness. I try not to linger too much and too long on what I had. When you died (I know today most say passing-a polite way of saying adios amigo). No, you died after months in a coma from heart disease and an accident in your car. Heartbroken I was and to tell the truth, heartbroken I remain. I try and stay positive and have recreated my life without you (actually, without anyone as Sister A & Sister B took off in a huff over money)-who can you trust these days?

When I think of the life I live today, sometimes I'm sad but (and here's the part you'll like) mostly I am grateful; grateful for the space in time we occupied together and for the foundation you gave me. My bedrock is made up of the qualities you showed me and shared with everyone-honesty, integrity, genuine caring, over the top strength. When life dishes me a tough meal, a broken friendship, an insincere agreement, a selfish exchange-yes, I remember you. I figure if you could pull yourself up from the many boulders that fell on top of you-your father's early death, your young 26 year old Navy Officer husband's death in World War II leaving you with a 5-year old daughter while 7 months pregnant with a son; your mother's death from a long bout with cancer, your now 18 year old beauty queen daughter's death in a car accident your decorated Navy commander son's death at 36 while in the Pentagon, a still birth of your last baby, the death of your second husband (my father) at 62 from cancer. Yes, your burdens were great and still there you were-relocated, active, moving on, making new friends, and sharing most of your life and time with me.

It is at these times that I feel your loss so greatly. When I'm down and facing challenges, I recall your times of sorrow and my issues, regrets, weariness quickly find focus. Perspective is gained and I feel myself filled to the brim with strength. I can do it! If you could and did handle all your many, varied life changes and sudden losses and work through your grief and sadness to find a way past it all; surely I can move forward loving life and believing in God's goodness. Surely I can do this simple thing and I take heart in the fine example I was shown. Yes, I remember you and every day honor you Mom and count my lucky stars that I was shown true grace and faith in action.

Cathy

