

I started looking at Mom differently the moment I became a Parent 36 years ago. Jody had just delivered the twins – I walked out to see everyone in the waiting room with Kim in one arm and Amy in the other. I handed one of them to my in-laws and the other to Mom – telling her she CRAZY for going through what I just saw Jody go through so many times....

She said “It’s God’s Greatest Gift” and “I would do it all again”.

I was 27 at the time - When Mom was 27 – she had already delivered 5 children and was probably pregnant with #6.

whenever I had a Milestone in my life I would IMAGINE what it was like for Mom and

Dad – for instance :

- Our Graduations from High School
- When They got their first house with a seemingly unaffordable monthly payment of \$300
- Tuition x10 between Riordan and Epiphany

But – Mom and Dad both had a STRONG work ethic – it was a life lesson MOST of us learned from them.

Weekly Allowance in our house was either 50 cents – 25 cents or 10 cents. You would be surprised how much candy that would pay for back then. BUT - If you wanted more – you had to earn it.

I think ALL OF US had at least thrown a paper route by 10 years old ---- IF NOT – had a route or 2 of their own. Thank God for the Chronicle, Examiner and Progress for exploiting minors. And, at 10 -11 – 12 years old, we had to go door to door and collect the monthly bill. Imagine your PRE TEEN doing that today!

in 1970 - Mom and Dad DIVORCED after 5 years on Pope St. –

IMAGINE being 40 years old and a SINGLE PARENT of 10.... 9 of which were still living at home.

The Tuition, Mortgage and Food bills were only growing.

To make ends meet - Mom had to pick up a second job – and a supplemental income source. (ask any one us about RIBBONS for the trophy company at the luncheon)

At that point it would have been EASIER to put us all in Public School to eliminate at least the Tuition bill but, Mom thought it was important for all of us to continue our CATHOLIC EDUCATION – just as she had.

In Mom's new role as SINGLE PARENT – she knew IT WAS GOING TO TAKE A VILLAGE get us through school and on with our lives. and LUCKILY MOM HAD ONE!

Prior to this – Starting a Vacuum cleaner was a good way to EVACUATE the house.

But now, everyone had to pitch in.....The first thing that was implemented was a CHORE LIST – Everyone had a CHORE TO DO every day for that week. It was posted on the Ironing Board Door in the kitchen and resembled a modern day FOOTBALL POOL.

- Sweep the floor - Empty the dishwasher
- Load the dishwasher and wash the pots and pans
- Make lunches - Clear the table
- Help the younger ones with homework

- Vacuum
- Laundry

As we got older and could drive, our Village got bigger with the help of the Sisters of the Presentation donating day old bread and hostess snack products.

Going shopping was a dreaded chore for us older ones – paying at the register with FOOD STAMPS.

Mr. Ed Fenely & Riordan High School allowed us to work for our Tuition. Gary started in the Marianist Brothers Residence Kitchen – setting up and cleaning up after their nightly dinners. (3-4 hours a night) I followed Gary after he graduated, Craig followed me and Ricky followed him. But, Dennis – got accepted to the ACCELERATED pay off your

Tuition program. He worked 8 hours a day, Monday through Friday all Summer long doing Maintenance on the School and the Gym with Brother Koehler. (like painting classrooms and hallways)

Then, during the School Year – he worked in the Gym doing Laundry when was not in class. In hind sight, Dennis clearly worked to pay to the Lions share of our tuition.

I asked Mom about Riordan Tuition a couple years ago. She said she continued to send them a check every month (coupon book) until they said she was done – and the same for Epiphany.

Through it all Mom continued to participate in one of the things that truly brought her JOY... Her monthly dinners (which later became Lunches) with her 4 high school buddies. They had all met at Presentation High School and became close friends. As they got older – one by one they were called to Heaven until Mom was the last one standing. (At the funeral for Anne Cordes – the last of friends to pass – Anne’s husband Stan called her “the last of the Mohicans”

...OFF Script...

Over the years – MOM was A LOT of things:

- A chauffeur
- A Paper route driver with a station wagon

- A provider
- A Role Model
- A mentor and a MOM

But, One thing she was NOT is a COOK!

Mom enjoyed a good meal as much as any one of us.

Dad worked in the kitchen for a short time while he was in the Army so, every once in a while we would have those Army delicacies –

Chipped Beef on Toast and Corned Beef Hash.

Mom did make a pretty mean Turkey at Thanksgiving with Oyster Stuffing but, other than that, she boiled or fried everything until it was dead and tasteless...

THANK GOD FOR JACK !!

Mom started showing signs of Alzheimers at the young age of 70 – she had trouble balancing her check book, remembering if she took her medications, falling for telephone scammers and having trouble with her vision.

She was living by herself on Pope Street when she started down that slippery slope – loss of independence.

After a phone call in the middle of the night from Life Alert in 2009 – Followed closely by a hospital stay @ UCSF – It was no longer safe for Mom to live alone on Pope Street.

We sold the house & she moved into Marymount Greenhills Assited living in Millbrae.

Eventhough she was getting

all her medicine handed to her when it was time to take it,

3 square meals a day,

her hair done every Friday and

ALL the TV and Bingo she can handle – she still complained – about everything!

She was always a “Glass is half empty” person. (hospital – agitated – that means she is getting better)

She moved in in February and by September – it all turned around. She went from a Wreck Loose (recluse) to Resident of The Month with a write up in the monthly newsletter and “the best bingo caller we have ever had”. When asked WHY she was the BEST CALLER – they said it was because she SPEAKS clearly & projects her voice to reach the back of the room. She either learned that from her SINGING days or, Yelling at 10 kids for so many years.

Mom’s VILLAGE Grew to Include Grand Kids that would visit and brighten her day.

Sometimes on demand if I was working out of town & got a phone call from the Med Room Team.

SHE LIVED HAPPILY @ GreenHills for 9 years – until October of 2018 when her health needs increased to a level that the facility could not provide.

After another ER visit at UCSF, followed by 3 days in the hospital – she was accepted into Millbrae Skilled Care.

There were MANY surgeries, ER visits, Overnight hospital stays and 911 calls over the past 18 years.....All of which led to many hours in the car – going to and coming from DOCTORS appointments. My Love, admiration and RESPECT for MOM grew over the years as I learned about her early days with Grandpa, Nana, her siblings & Dad during those car rides.

Here are few of the lines I would hear regularly over the years:

- Getting OLD is not for Sissys
- What did I do now?
- If I had a nickel for everytime I heard that, I'd be rich
- Yeah....Right!
- Glenn - My memories not what it used to be
- I know you showed me but, I don't remember
- In the Beginning @ GreenHills – How Long Do I have to Stay here?
- After a year @ Greenhills – How Long Do I GET to Stay here?

- In the final years @ Greenhills – When she had a hospital stay – They won't give away my room, will they?
- And in the last 8 months At Millbrae Skilled Care – I guess this is it for me....huh?

In closing – I have a few last thoughts –

Just like everyone else, when Mom was hurting or down – she wondered WHY God had not taken her. Yet, To the contrary, when the room was full of visitors – she wanted to live longer than her mother – which was 92.

In this last year especially – she knew the end was coming – she was proud to have raised 10 kids..... she would say.. “ I think I did a good job.....I know I did the best I could”

When Mom would think about taking care of Nana the last years of her life – she would often say...”I wish I had been better to my Mother” –But, “I did the best I could”

And now that Mom is gone – those words ring true for me.

At times over the past 10 years, I felt like I was Mom’s PARENT –

But, I know I did the best I could – with the help of a much larger Village than we had 48
years ago

Mom – I will not miss watching you wince in pain

I have been missing you since you went home

I will miss our time together

Say HI to everyone for me!

Love you Mom

