

Eulogy for Catharine (Mates Litkowski) Mastradone

(September 5, 1920 - November 23, 2014)

Catharine Louise Mates Litkowski Mastradone was a good person, a good mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend. She seems to have been well-liked by everybody, including her caregivers in her last years (known as Miss Cathy). This goodness, not an affectation, permeated her interactions with others, where her actions spoke much louder than words. Mom and Dad provided us with a good, steady environment in which to grow up. We thank them for that.

When thinking of Mom, what comes to mind most immediately are the Catholic virtues (Diligence, Kindness, Humility, Patience, Charity, and Temperance). I like to think that I have these virtues, but not because they were hammered into me, but rather because they were infused by what I saw day after day. They are second nature (although not perfect). As an example, during the fall of my freshman year in high school, I came home with a D for a 100-word essay I had written on “Autumn”. Mom was infuriated: How can I look out the window and that’s all my essay can see? Can I not see the color and the beauty? Is my view so dry that I can only define autumn? (In other words, open up to the world around you.) Thanks, Mom.

I see these qualities in my siblings and all who can trace their heritage to Mom. Particularly diligence: none of us can sit still. Mom and Dad never drilled into us anything about education; this was a tacit assumption. They did well with that, with educators, scientists, doctors and health professionals, lawyers, and business-people. How she accomplished this by rounding off her checkbook amounts, I'll never know.

Mom and Dad were equal partners. They were yin and yang, complementary to one another, providing an amazing breadth of experience. Mom was a staunch feminist, although I never heard her characterize herself that way; she'd definitely thank her mother for that. I am so grateful that I have always viewed women and men as equal; again, just infused, not drilled.

Mom was the financial guru. Born of the depression, she had the sense of frugality (perhaps penny-pinching, but never overt and never a complaint). And yet, there was a richness in it all. A sense of the artistic. In later years, I remember looking at the books in the basement (Dad's handiwork book shelf) - all the great novels from the war years. Dad's art. And then, the piano arrived and Mom's Beethoven burst forth. Did I mention her sense of etiquette? Mom knew how to do things properly. Luckily, Mom and Dad were able to enjoy all the hard work in their later years.

Mom was short in height, with her high-heeled tennis shoes and wanting to be just short of 5 feet and wanting to wear heeled shoes to the bitter end. But she was not short in stature or feistiness. While the virtues were infused, broach one of them and she'd tell you what for. Say "just a secretary" and you'd be in for an earful. Back into the workforce after the children were grown, she became a typist with a vengeance (running the Maryland engineering department), and started taking college courses. After one of her angioplasties, she had been given a drug to which she had a bad reaction. I'll never forget the sight of four men attempting to keep her down. Way to go, Mom.

Mom was well-liked. She had easy friendships with many, in the church and in the community. She took to her grandchildren just as with her children. She enjoyed spending time with them, but with a "Buster" when they got out of line. She started into the great-grandchildren, with a letter to her first shortly after he was born, welcoming him as the next generation of the Litkowski family ("just remember us and have good memories" and "hold your head high and be the best you can be"). Seeing her interactions, never an unkind word, again infused, not drilled. There was the "Hell's bells" and the "Damn it" out of frustration, stomping her foot. But, her actions spoke volumes.

Mom has died, but she will live on. Her legacy will live in her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. It will not be overt, but it will be there. In the baseball genes passed to her great-grandsons, in the

dancing, dancing, dancing genes to some of her children and her great-granddaughter. And in the crossword puzzle genes passed to everybody.

Thanks, Mom.

Ken Litkowski

November 28, 2014