

I lost my mom bit by bit over the past 15 years. It's been devastating to watch Alzheimer's disease take the loving and caring mother who I grew up knowing, away from me. This morning, I want to remember and honor the fullness of who mom was.

### **patience**

Growing up, Mom was so patient with us three boys. I was a pretty ornery kid (well, all three of us were a handful I'm sure). As kids, the three of us would often play football or wrestle each other in the basement. For some reason, I liked pushing Ben and Steve's buttons back then and getting them riled up. Inevitably, I'd take it too far (too tight of a choke hold, or pinning them down a little too long). Ben or Steve would yell for mom to come rescue them.

I can remember mom dealing with these MANY situations in a calm and patient manner, and trying to teach me how to be a better brother. From my perspective the chaos of the house never seemed to phase her. I can imagine we would stress her out, but she didn't let it show. She was gentle and nurturing with us through it all.

Connected to the chaos of the house, I will always remember the 14 hour drives twice a year to visit relatives in Kansas. If you could survive those car rides with us 3 boys without losing your temper, you had a special gift.

People who know me, know I'm competitive. Even as a small boy, I hated losing (I'd cry every time I got out in baseball). Mom and I often played Rummy together, but she was hard to beat. I'd lose often and have a fit. No matter how poor of a sport I was when I lost, she would always be up for another game. Now, I play cards with Denise who doesn't put up with my shenanigans when I lose, and I realize just how patient mom was with me back then (sorry Denise).

Mom was one of the goofiest people I've ever known. She had a great sense of humor. I spent much of my childhood laughing at silly things mom did. For example, one evening when I was in elementary school (and Ben and Steve in high school) we were all five sitting around flipping channels on TV trying to find something to watch. We stumbled upon the Miss America pageant and Dad quickly changed the channel. No one noticed Mom slip out of the room. Minutes later, she came down the stairs in her bathing suit and tennis shoes, strutting around the living room like she was in a pageant herself. She was giggling the whole time.

Watching your mom strut around the living room in a one-piece swimsuit and new balance shoes really changes your perspective on the Miss America pageant.

Even after the initial Alzheimers diagnosis, you could still get Mom going with a joke or a silly expression. The best was when you could get her to laugh so hard that a fart would slip, and that would trigger more laughing, which triggered more farting, until she would beg us to stop making her laugh

Mom had the ability to break the tension with a well timed joke or laugh that would immediately help calm the situation. Hours after Mom died, I thought I should make a joke in her honor. I told

Dad that since Mom had died, it was now time for him to go get a job, and start building up that inheritance again. Mom, I know you would've laughed at that one.

Mom was a talented musician, as has been talked about a lot today. That was something that I took for granted as a kid. But, what a resource to have in the house growing up as I took piano lessons and then took on the clarinet as an elementary student. When having to decide what instrument to pick I remember thinking I can't choose the flute, because that was Mom's instrument, so I chose the clarinet thinking it was the closest thing to the flute. I have so many good memories of listening to Mom sing and play the flute on a Sunday morning at Fellowship of Hope.

Mom had such a big sweet tooth. Mom could always be convinced to stop at Dairy Queen. She had a theory that the ice cream at the DQ in downtown Elkhart was best because they used filtered water. We never figured out if that was true, but I think about your theory everytime I get a peanut butter sundae from Dairy Queen. Mom used to take me to get a donut as a reward for making a trip to the dentist. This may seem counterproductive, but this was one of my favorite Mother-son traditions. Thanks to Mom, I find myself craving a donut every day, sorry, I mean just after a visit to the dentist.

Now for the hard part.....

Mom, Alzheimers disease took so much from you. This greiving process didn't start when you died, it started over 15 years ago, when you started showing signs of this awful disease.

These are a few of the things I grieve:

I have grieved the fact that you didn't get to know Denise, my best friend, a person so special and beautiful to me that I know you two would've loved spending time together.

I have grieved the fact that you weren't present for important milestones in Ben, Steve, and my adulthood.

I have grieved the fact that you and Dad didn't have the retirement that you both thought you would. The places you would've traveled, the people you would've met, all those experiences lost.

I have grieved the fact that I couldn't go home when I felt sick, knowing that you would be there to care for me, nursing me back to health, sending me back out into the world.

But your story is not just about loss, and Mom, you carry on with us in the ways that you taught us,.

Because of you, I want to be more sensitive to the needs of others I meet each day.

Because of you, I want to be more genuine and present with friends and family.

Because of you, I want to laugh more, and not take things too seriously

I'm so glad your suffering is over, and you can finally rest. Love you Mom.