

Thelma Cardon Saper -- Remembering My Mother's Life

Friday, May 9, 2014

Roy Cardon Saper

It was 96 years ago, in 1918, that the Great War ended with 9 million lives lost and 50 million died in the influenza pandemic. Half of all the cars in the U.S. were Model T's but trains were the primary form of transport for Americans. Woodrow Wilson was in the White House, the average wage in America was \$875 a year, an auto would cost \$360, and a home was about \$6,700 when the U.S. population was a third of today's 300+ million and the unemployment rate was 1.4 percent.

A postage stamp was 3 cents (the same as a one pound Hershey bar), a movie ticket was 7 cents, a box of cereal or a gallon of gasoline was 8 cents, loaf of bread 10 cents and a cocktail was 15 cents.

The pop-up toaster and fortune cookies were invented and Congress created the time zones we now have and daylight savings time was established in 1918.

And in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on February 22 Russian Herman Cardon and Romanian Rosella Streiff Cardon who came to America with 8th grade educations, welcomed their new baby daughter, Thelma Cardon, to the world. And Tuesday night, May 6th, at age 96, my Mother died due to the progression of Alzheimer's disease when she stopped eating and drinking last week and just slept in her final days.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her two brothers and two sisters, my older brother Jerry (at age 29 in 1975), my younger brother Craig (at age 21 in 1974). I am Roy Saper, Thelma and Martin's middle of five sons, living here in East Lansing. My older brother, Brian, from the Boston area is here and my younger brother, Paul, from Austin, Texas is also here with his wife and sons, Jacob and Craig. My wife, Nell Kuhnmuensch and our sons Adam and Jay are also here. And of course my Father, Martin, 97, is also with us this morning.

My Mother lived longer than many others whose names you may know who also were born in 1918 -- Leonard Bernstein, Rita Hayworth, Mike Wallace, Sam Walton, Pearl Bailey, Howard Cosell, Betty Ford, Skitch Henderson, Ann Landers, Jack Paar, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Mickey Spillane, Ted Williams, Coleman Young, and Nelson Mandela.

My Mother was born before the Band-Aid and insulin were invented, before traffic signals or television or frozen food. Technicolor hadn't been created, penicillin was not discovered, bubble gum did not yet exist and there was no such thing as electric shavers. Cars did not have radios and yo-yos were not yet a fad. When my Mother was born there was no Scotch tape, Polaroid photos or zoom lenses, or parking meters. Drive-in theaters were not in existence nor were stereo records or tape recordings,

canned beer or nylon or radar. Ballpoint pens, jet engines, helicopters, aerosol spray cans, the slinky, Frisbee, and silly putty were not yet made. Cake mixes, credit cards, super glue came decades after my Mother was born 96 years ago.

Her early years were in Jamaica Queens, New York City. As a teen her family moved to Lawrence, Long Island, New York, a Jewish community in Nassau County near the Atlantic and the then-new Idlewild (now JFK) airport. The 17 year old Thelma earned \$10 a week, with tips adding another \$6 or so to her weekly earnings. She spent 5 or 10 cents a day on NY transportation, a new work apron almost weekly for 35 cents and it appears she treated her family to the movies for 25 cents per person. She loved her family, buying gifts for a brother, candy for a sister, a dress for her "ma", a hat for her "pa" and I saw in her tiny expense book where she gave a gift of \$50 to her parents, equal to about two months of tips income.

By 1940 when she was 22, she lived in Queens on 139th Street with her parents, an older brother and younger sister and a 6 year old niece who she cared for when the niece, now 80, was between foster homes. Surprisingly, it is only recently that my brothers and I discovered the existence of this long-lost niece and her father, my uncle and Thelma's brother, who we never knew existed, a curiosity that may always be so.

My Mother had worked in a beauty parlor around age 20. She also worked in her father's store, Cardon's 5-10-25 (as in cents) where the family lived upstairs and in the morning her father would go downstairs to crank open the awning and open the door to customers. He may have had three stores and my Mother would serve as a clerk in the family business. My father also remembers one of his stores in Newark by the ocean.

At home they sometimes spoke Jewish -- a mixture of Yiddish, with some German thrown in. It is likely that Yiddish was the common language of my grandparents.

When I was younger, my mother would speak Yiddish to others in our presence when she didn't think we needed to know what was being said. And a couple years ago she tried out her German with my son Jay who studied the language in school.

In the spring of 1941 my Mother took a train from New York to Jackson to visit a New York friend who had come to Jackson to visit her family who lived there. The friend had given my Mother the train ticket to come to Jackson.

My Mother went to Friday night (confirmation) services in Jackson that weekend where a congregant had intended on introducing my Mother to a gentleman but the subject of that intended introduction was there with his girl friend so he introduced my Mother to my Father, Martin, instead. Thelma stayed in Detroit at a cousin's home and my Father visited with her later that weekend they met.

My Dad went home and told his parents that he liked Thelma but his parents told him he doesn't know anything about her family so he took a train to New York to meet Thelma's family. He was picked up by my Mother's friend as Mother was working. Her parents' 5-10-25 store by the waterfront in Newark operated during the summer months (and

they wintered in Florida). Martin met Thelma in Jamaica, Queens just when Mother's brother was coming home from his honeymoon. I believe my Mother was working as a beautician, doing nails.

My Dad had just graduated from then-MSC (now MSU) in the spring of 1941. Later my Mother took a train to Michigan to visit my Dad.

They decided to get married so my Mother's parents planned the wedding for February 23, 1942, a day after my Mother's 24th birthday. The wedding was held on the second floor hall of the Old Romanian, a nightclub/restaurant/entertainment facility in New York. I am told that my Mother's father had taken her in to get a marriage license and apparently the officials thought that the older man my Mother was with was the intended groom.

They honeymooned at Niagara Falls where they had taken a train. My Dad had only one day off from his work at Detroit Ordnance where he designed gauges for the manufacture of the water-cooled Browning 50-caliber machine gun.

Right after their marriage (more than 72 years ago) my Dad joined the Armed Forces, having applied for a commission rather than being drafted. One year later, March 23, 1943 he went overseas, leaving Thelma with her family back in New York.

When my Dad returned home after World War II they lived in Ann Arbor, then Jackson, Flint, Louisville, and finally here in East Lansing. In 1949 my parents built their first house in Jackson in a large open field, that home still standing but with neighboring houses on all sides.

My Mother kept a strictly Kosher home with additional sets of everything for Passover. Needless to say, we never had cheeseburgers or beef stroganoff or lasagna, no shrimp or clams. At least not at home. I don't recall ever having gone to a fast food restaurant while growing up. I remember that if ever there was food left on our plate at the end of a meal, it would be served to us at the next meal. There was no waste. If it was served, it was to be eaten. If we were 10 years old, we had to eat 10 of the lima beans. If we didn't like oatmeal for breakfast, there would not be any other food served until the oatmeal was eaten. Another age-based computation was our weekly allowance which used to be five cents times our age -- and later doubled to 10 cents times our age a week.

We used canned evaporated milk on our cereals and later my Mother tried to have us use powdered milk which tasted like you'd imagine watered down powdered milk to be. Maybe that was a signal of austerity but it didn't last long.

One of the first memories of my Mother was when she taught me how to write my name using crayons on a Velveeta cheese box at a very young age. I remember her giving us a nickel or dime for when we heard the bells of the ice-cream cart getting closer to our street.

My Mother says she was strict, but her boys turned out okay. One of my Mother's rules was that we could do anything we wanted, once we had our own homes. Until then, we did what we were told. Well, maybe not my older brother, Jerry.

Every Friday night my four brothers and I would gather for a Shabbat dinner, often well-done brisket and roast vegetables, freshly baked challah, my Dad's homemade horseradish -- and my Mother lighting the candles, holding a small prayer book that was a part of every Friday night and holiday. After dinner we would get dressed up to go to Friday night services, only to return Saturday morning for Hebrew school and Sunday morning for religious school when we lived in Flint in the 1950s to mid-60s.

My Mother was the original recycler. Everything was reused or repurposed. There was no waste or unnecessary extravagance.

On Chanukah we lit the menorah candles. On Passover we would hunt for the Afikomen. On Purim, my mother would help us dress up in character. On Halloween, my Mother had us wear a raincoat over the costumes but in those days we stayed up quite late and collected many bags of candy, planning our route so that we would pass by our house at times to pour out the candy that my Mother would be sorting on the living room carpet. On Christmas morning we would wake up to find a stocking for each of us boys, filled with almonds and pecans in their shells, an orange, and maybe a some sticks of sugarless gum, probably a special treat as we were only permitted candy or sweets on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Religion was very important to my Mother. Her daily ledger from the mid 30s shows she went to synagogue meetings often when she was 17. In Louisville she and Martin were partly responsible for creating a new synagogue and funding its library. Wherever they lived, they had an active, participatory role in the synagogues of their community.

We celebrated about every holiday. And if my Mother could have a party to celebrate it, so much the better. She loved to entertain friends, proudly preparing and serving her cakes, pastries, and other desserts. When she would host an Oneg Shabbat she would not go to Kroger's to get the cakes and cookies! Many holidays were celebrated at our East Lansing home where it was a treat to have my sons have the special honor and joy of interacting with their grandmother who gave life to their father.

We did go out as a family to the Howard Johnson's fish fry in Flint and on Sunday's in the late 50s or early 60s we five Saper boys in our plaid sports jackets and ties would join our parents at the Durant Hotel brunch.

I remember my Mother driving me to my violin lessons in downtown Flint in the '53 black Ford. I recall her driving us to my Dad's car washes to bring him his lunch pail.

I also remember when my parents were at a car wash convention in D.C. that they called us and had us get on a plane to fly out to be with them as other families had their children there. I was in elementary school.

And during the December break from school in the early 60s my parents allowed me to take a Greyhound Bus with older brother Jerry one year and younger brother Craig another year from Flint to Florida to visit my grandparents.

When we walked home from elementary school in Flint in the 50s and early 60s every day for lunch, my Mother would have the grilled cheese or tomato soup ready for us. She would be at the ironing board while doing the loads of wash one would expect for a family of seven. The soaps were on TV while she ironed everything. In junior high school she packed me lunches -- the memorable ones were double layers of bologna sandwiches with ketchup and peanut butter and marshmallow cream sandwiches. She knew I loved ketchup so for a birthday she bought me a gigantic, restaurant size can of ketchup.

On Sundays we would all shine our shoes. My Mother would cut our hair. In fact, I didn't know barbers existed until I was a teen.

Each of us boys had evening responsibilities. One would set the table, one would clear it, one would wash the dishes, another would dry them. After dinner my Mother would sit at the table and have her tea and read every word in the newspaper without wanting to be disturbed. Our dinners were always at 6:30pm when my Dad came home from work. And it was a complete and real family dinner every night and we were all there. On an occasional weekend we may have picnicked in a park.

We would usually practice our violin and do homework before dinner. When we would have a school-related question or other curiosity, my Mother's response was to "look it up". So we would pull out the correct Britannica volume to find the answer. The encyclopedia was amazing. Answers to any questions right there in our own home. And no electricity or charging required. My Mother encouraged us to submit entries to the Flint Journal's Wide Awake Club where we would send our poems, stories, and drawings that, when published in the Journal, would qualify us to win books that my Mother would drive us to the Flint Journal offices to select.

My Mother would often respond "Mother's know" when we asked how she knew certain things.

Sunday was family TV night. My Mother always tuned in to Ed Sullivan and then we watched Bonanza. By the time the clock showed 7:55pm we had to be in our pajamas and by 8pm we had to be in bed. I remember two sets of bunk beds in the bedroom in our small house in Flint. I also remember my parents telling us that the new color TV we got in the early 60s would actually broadcast in color. I couldn't understand the concept as that just did not seem possible -- until we saw it with Bonanza on NBC in living color.

On Saturdays and Sundays my Mother would have the record player on, listening to Gilbert and Sullivan and classical music from the collection of 33rpm LPs that is in my Dad's condo today.

My Mother loved entertaining. My B'nai Mitzvah, with my 11-month younger brother Craig, gave her the opportunity to make and share her mandelbrot, rugelach, and other baked goods. She taught me to make challah when I was in elementary school. I remember when my parents would grind fish to make gefilte fish and grate potatoes to make latkes. My Mother made us mamaliga, fried smelt, parsnips and other deep fat fried foods, kugels, hamantashens, real matzoh ball and chicken soups, chopped chicken livers, liver and onions, beef tongue, tzimmes, salami and eggs, pecan pies and other cholesterol killers.

My Mother was proud that a cooking contest that I entered and won in the 1970's used an adaptation of a mushroom hamantaschen appetizer recipe that she created and won in a B'nai Brith cooking contest.

My Mother was a volunteer docent at the Louisville, Kentucky Speed Art Museum and later did the catering for museum events. The museum then proposed the addition of a restaurant to the facility asking Thelma to manage it, an offer she chose not to accept.

A special treat was when our parents were going out at night, my Mother all dolled up with a silky dress and hair pulled up, and we boys could eat aluminum tray TV dinners and pot pies heated in the oven.

My Mother loved to make and decorate cakes and other baked goods for the many parties she had, entertaining friends in their homes in Louisville, Kentucky where they lived from the mid-60s until they moved to East Lansing in 1990 when my second son, Jay, was born. At their condo in East Lansing they hosted parties for relatives to celebrate anniversaries and holidays, my Mother always preparing all the food with my Dad. My parents together prepared all the food for the two seder nights which we had at their home every year I remember until the past couple years. We used vintage Maxwell House haggadahs; you know, the ones with the wine and charoset stains on the center pages.

My Mother was an active volunteer for many organizations, the Flint General Hospital Guild, museums where she served as a docent and enjoyed giving tours to children.

She joined many social organizations as an active participant. She helped my father and always accompanied him to the WWII veterans conventions and meetings that my Dad organized at the national, regional, and local levels for those who served in the China Burma India theater during WWII.

She was a proud donor to the Red Cross, giving her blood more than 80 times in about 50 years; she wore a lapel pin showing the milestone donations in gallons. To celebrate

their 51st wedding anniversary, my parents both donated blood, my Mother having donated nearly 9 ½ gallons by that time.

My Mother, with my Dad, have been philanthropic in many ways, generous in supporting causes they valued, resulting in their being on seemingly every fundraising list.

My mother was thoughtful and generous to others as well. She always fed the cleaning lady well and sent her home with food. She would bring food to doctors and others with whom she would be meeting or having appointments.

My parents were generous to us boys as well. When I wanted an electric guitar in the early 60s, I one day came home and the guitar was on my bed. When I wanted to go to the Interlochen Arts Academy in 10th grade, my parents paid the private school tuition so I could have that opportunity. My parents paid the undergraduate tuition for all five boys so that we never had to work or borrow funds to go to college.

When Nell and I traveled to New York to attend art expositions, my parents stayed at our home to enjoy and care for our then young Adam and Jay.

I remember my Mother in Louisville riding my brother Paul's new bicycle with the long banana seat and streamers wavering from the handle bar grips. I have many photos of her entertaining at their home parties when I was around in the 60s and in the past 10-20 years. I remember hanging her large collection of restaurant menus from their world travels. On cruise ships I remember her sitting in hot tubs so long that others would have to pull her out. She loved chocolate and went on chocolate themed cruises. My Mother enjoyed her travels to Japan and China, Mexico, Taiwan, Greece and throughout Europe.

Thelma loved her grandchildren, and was so proud at the bris ceremonies where her large corsage, pressed dress, well-coifed hair and proud smile displayed her joy. Meanwhile, of course, the baby was likely shrieking.

She, with Martin, took her grandchildren on ElderHostel trips, discovering and learning in Wisconsin and Texas.

With grandchildren she would teach the right way to make a hamantaschen and bake for the boys their favorite pies.

We would be sure to include them in Chanukah candle lighting with their grandchildren in Michigan and attend Passover and other celebrations with the grandchildren in Texas. She would join in daughter-in-law Jeri's Jazzercise class when she would be down there in Texas.

Nephew Jake would write her about the impact he felt after visiting Jerusalem. And Thelma was sure to attend his college graduation at Yale.

In my home, where we frequently had my parents over for Sunday dinner (in earlier years), my Mother smiled as she was entertained by my Adam and Jay who played their guitars, mandolin and banjo and sang for her.

What a site it was to see Thelma in New Orleans following a family cruise where we stood on the streets during a Mardi Gras parade. As those on the floats would throw out coins and beads to people lining the street, Thelma, a little crooked and bent would raise her cane and stake claim to a doubloon or strand of beads by holding it in place with her cane until retrieved. Photographers would take pictures of my parents who seemed to be double the age of anyone else lining the parade route. They both wore more than a dozen colorful beads around their necks and enthusiastic smiles on their faces as they reveled in the loud and exciting Mardi Gras festivities.

My parents celebrated all major milestones such as their 50th wedding anniversary at the MSU University Club in 1992 and a 65th anniversary party in 2007. I still remember my brothers and I buying them silver candlesticks for their 25th wedding anniversary.

My Mother managed many socials and potlucks and always accompanied my Dad to Chamber and other mixers, developing many fans for being so generous and genuine, welcoming and accepting.

For 72 years my parents shared a happy life dedicated to each other, supporting the other, and wanting to spend time with each other. Every day my father would have lunch with Thelma at Burcham.

She accompanied him on his many convention trips around the globe and supported his activities when my father would be chairing a convention or serving as president of the organization. She delighted in being with my Dad.

When I asked my Dad what he liked most about my mother, he replied that she was very affectionate. Clearly my brothers and I are the evidence of that. When they would pose for photographs, my father would often plant a kiss on her to show that affection.

He remembers that her hair was always very long and often braided and wrapped around her head. We have several photos of when she did modeling in her early years.

My Dad told me that my Mother did things to please people. Even at Burcham she was offering help and care to others up there who were also wheelchair bound. She invited other Burcham residents to her home, even though it was likely she would never return to the home she had previously shared with my father. She would offer clothes to others and on rare occasions would even share her chocolate with other Burcham residents, though generally she would prefer to save it for later when she was alone.

She loved her four grandchildren and would remind me frequently that she would like me to get married and have children some day -- as recently as this past month, frequently telling me that she would love to buy a new dress (for the wedding). If a

nurse came over to her while I was with her at Burcham, my Mother would ask if she was "The Girl", always approving what she saw as my wife prospect. In reality, in our junior and high schools days, our Mother would proclaim that we could date anyone so long as she was an NJG -- a nice Jewish Girl.

I remember going on dates in 9th grade, my Mother would drive me to pick up the 15 year old NJG and take us to the party. And when she picked us up after the dance she would drive us to the girl's home and while I would walk her up to her front door, my mother would back out of the driveway and circle the block, apparently to give us two young teens private time before my date would go inside her home to waiting parents.

My Mother was not always respectful of one's feeling or understanding of one's situation. She called it like she saw it. At most doctor office visits she would audibly say about a nurse in front of her, "she's fat, I don't want to be fat." Like a very young child, her comments might be brutally and seemingly unfairly honest. Politically correct was not in her lexicon.

Yet she did not reject the subject of her admonishment. In fact, for the next visit she may bring a jar of soup, a package of cookies or another gift.

She read everything and clipped not just grocery coupons, but articles that she wanted to keep or share with others. In the days before she became so direct and honest (or brutal) in some of her remarks, she would just leave around for you to see, a relevant Ann Landers column that may address the situation of concern to her.

As a large family with my brothers we celebrated my parents' 60th wedding anniversary with a cruise to Alaska. My brother Brian has arranged many others Caribbean cruises that my parents have loved.

When my Mother was 80 she was still going to the YMCA about five or six days a week, always walking on the treadmill and doing water exercises.

For the past two years I visited my Mother almost nightly at the skilled nursing care section of Burcham Hills Retirement Center and would often bring her chocolate which was an antidote to anything. Last Saturday I brought her a small chocolate bar, but gave it to a caregiver when I realized that she had stopped eating and stopped drinking, an apparent effect of the Alzheimer's disease.

Her eyes were closed and she was no longer responsive to words or touch.

Generally she would be exuberant when I would show up after work, almost always asking how I knew she was there (at Burcham), excited to have a visitor, though not always certain who I was. The last 40 to 50 years had been forgotten. She presumed I was in my 20s and lived at home and she just celebrated her 50th birthday even though that actually happened in 1968, not just weeks ago. She would sometimes tell me that she just had a birthday but no one brought presents. Of course I would remind her that

her grandsons really did bring her presents and she was then satisfied. She never seemed to be concerned that she did not remember the past minute, hour, day, month, year, or decades.

She was quick with clever, creative, unexpected, untraditional responses to questions I would ask. To "Mother, how old are you?", she would respond, "a year older than last year!" If I would ask what State she was in, she'd quickly respond "enchantment"!

If I asked if she remembered my name, she told me it was "dearie", as that could be right for anyone. Other times she would introduce me as her brother.

The staff at Burcham were wonderful nurses and caregivers even though my Mother may have been difficult at times such as when she had no idea where she was, why she was there and not home. My Mother would tell another Burcham resident that she would drive her home if the other resident would find her car and purse. I do not recall my Mother driving a car in decades or even carrying a purse in many years.

A few days ago a nurse told me that my Mother recently barked to her "how do you get a quarter pound of water chestnuts around here?!", maybe thinking she was at a deli, exasperated that no one was taking her order.

Sometimes my Mother would know that I was related, but unsure how. On occasion I might have asked her if she was planning to be there the next night, as if she was, then I would stop by again. She would tell me that she may be there unless Roy would come over and take her somewhere, apparently not realizing that I was the Roy of whom she spoke.

She would frequently ask how I knew she was there, to which I responded that she is my Mother and that it is my job to know where she is. When she asked where I was before finding her, I told her that I was at work and stopped by on my way home. She would ask when I got a job and whether I work for my brother and whether he pays me. Of course I would go along with the belief that there is a brother I work for as that was the world where she was at that moment.

At times my mother was surprised when I said I was going home as she did not know that I had a house different than hers and wondered why I would never have invited her to the house though, in reality, she had been there on dozens of occasions and most Sunday dinners.

Sometimes when I would drive her to a doctor's appointment she would ask whether we would be seeing her parents. I suspect that may, in fact be where she is today. When we were at a doctor's office, there often was no cognizance of where we were or why.

Once I was with her and asked her to stay put for a quick moment as I wanted to get something from her room. When I returned moments later she was so excited to see

me and exclaimed that my brother had just been there, not recognizing that I was the son who was there and had returned moments later.

She did not want to inconvenience anyone and was helpful and generous in her volunteering and giving to others. One night at Burcham she and I were the last ones in the large living room-like area on her third floor. She told me that she would spend the night on one couch and I could spend the night on the other couch. (I am not sure if that may have been reminiscing subliminally about days when maybe she couch-surfed.) I suggested to her that there was a furnished room where she could spend the night. She did not believe that was the case so I wheeled her down to her room and told her she should stay in the bed in the room instead of on a couch. She insisted that I stay on the bed and she would stay on the couch (even though, of course, my intent was to go home for the night). I protested and she compromised by suggesting that she would stay in the bed and that I then could climb in next to her. Perhaps she thought I was her husband but I did manage to get home that night!

What I've learned in recent years is what we all recognize eventually, and that is that life is precious and too short. We must value that which we have and give thanks to those who made possible our very existence. In my case, our grandparents who fled dangerous situations in Eastern Europe and Russia and came to America with very little but a will to make it in America, a spirit to work while facing the many barriers one would expect speaking a different language, an energy of creative entrepreneurship and the love of family. This is what I gained from my grandparents and my Mother and Dad. Work hard, take nothing for granted, do the best that is possible, give and share with others, and consider family first.

What I've also learned and recognize well is that death is a part of life.

Although my Mother's physical presence is no longer with us, I know that the memories that I have and the joys my family will remember will be with us always. For me, the best way of honoring and remembering my Mother would be for everyone here to think about conveying thanks and appreciation to your parents, your children, your family for all that they do and have done for you. Our existence is a gift from our parents and they should be revered for giving us the gift of life and the joys we have experienced -- before it is us who become the memory of others.

The experience with my Mother has been very much like a circle. Just as my Mother sat with and cared for my brothers and me as infants, I have sat and cared for my Mother at the time in her life when her needs have been the greatest and beyond what would properly be able to be managed at home without professional medical and caring staff. It is a mitzvah, one of 613 commandments in the Hebrew Bible that are expected that Jews observe and would be reasonable for people of every faith to direct their actions, particularly as they relate to others.

Older people are not an inconvenience. They are as precious, valuable and should be revered as such, just as we revel over a newborn baby. They are family. They are

beautiful. They have lived a long life often dedicated to helping and supporting their children, giving advice even if not solicited. They deserve our time, our dedication, and devotion. An older person gets joy from company and companionship, likes to have someone hold their hand and give them a hug, spend time with them and show they care. For we, too, will be that older person, maybe in not too many years. And shouldn't we treat others as we would want to be treated ourselves?

Your presence here is a beautiful tribute to my Mother. I know you have other places to be on a work day, and for most here this morning you've had to make a change in plans from what you would normally be doing. Some of you came here from great distances to remember my Mother. Your friendship and honoring my Mother and our family by being here is a generosity that we will treasure and long remember. Many of you have written my Mother notes and cards, brought her plates of candy and cookies, flowers, and other gifts. You've asked how she is doing, you've phoned, you've shown you cared. Please know how valuable those gifts have been and appreciative we are for all you have done -- and for your thoughtfulness and extension of kindness. We, Thelma's family, would love to remember your presence here and would be honored if you would take a moment to sign the sheets outside the sanctuary and indicate how you may know of Thelma or the family.

A family is built on love. My Mother loved us as a parent would, and we love you for giving us the gift of your presence as we remember my and my brother's Mother and grandmother to our children, and wife of 72 years to my Dad, Martin: Thelma Saper. Thank you being here for my parents, for me, and my family.

To my Mother, you are at peace. And I am, too.