

Helen Paull

Those of us who have been to the Jewish cemetery in Edmonton know that on the day of a funeral it is always very windy and 20 degrees colder at the cemetery than just outside the gates and beyond.

But this was Mom's burial and she would have none of that ... and on an otherwise very windy, cool day in Edmonton on Tuesday October 16 the wind died down at 10:00 am and the sun came out at 10:30 and embraced the family of Helen Paull.

Everybody who was at the burial looked at one another knowingly and said to themselves or out loud: "Helen had a hand in planning it this way". Even Aunty Arliss, Mom's sister-in-law said to me that you could almost hear the words of the song "I did it my way"

And that my friends, was the essence of Mom.

She knew what she wanted, she thought carefully about how to get there and she implemented her plan.

She could not pick the age that she would die and in fact never thought she would make it to 70 but when she did find out that she had cancer, she knew she could come up with the right plan for how and when it would take her.

She knew that she needed more than the 4 months that the Doctors were giving her so that she could put HER affairs in order, put DAD'S affairs in order, make peace where needed and spend quality time with her friends and family. She was not concerned for herself but only for the people around her because she knew that we all needed that time with her. She didn't mourn for herself nor did she want anyone else to mourn for her ... it was not in her plan.

So she decided to take the Chemo that was offered and defied all medical logic by not only arresting the growth of the cancer but actually decreasing its hold on her. And she had to do it twice because she needed more time to implement her plan.

And when she was ready to go she told us that she had finished what she needed to do and it was time for her to, as she put it, "GO HOME". The Palliative Care Nurses both the day before and the day she died told us that they didn't think her end was imminent but they forgot to ask Mom what HER plan was. She lived on her terms and she died on her terms.

While Mom was getting us ready over the past year we all had a chance to spend a great deal of quality time with her. She would talk about the present but more particularly she was eager to reminisce about the past.

She told me that there were 4 spheres in her life ... FAMILY, COMMITTMENT TO COMMUNITY, HER FAITH AND SEBA BEACH.

Each had its own very special and particular place but the spheres were interwoven and inseparable ... well except maybe for the cottage at SEBA BEACH.

Mom grew up in a very special home environment. Grandpa Abe was an imposing figure both at home and in the Courtroom. He earned his respect by combining his intellect with a sense of charity and a good dose of common sense and humility. Grandma Betty was kind and giving and caring. My mother, along with her brothers Leon and Tevie, learned those traits well and incorporated them into their lives. All three of them have earned the enormous respect that they have from

their families and communities and all three have combined the best traits of both. My mother adored her parents, and the love that she shared with them and her brothers shaped her as a wife, mother and grandmother. Mom, you EARNED your respect from us every day and no greater than in your last year!!!

When you talk about Mom and family the first and foremost thought on everyone's mind is DAD. In the dictionary beside the definition of TRUE LOVE there should be a picture of Mom and DAD. Their union of over 60 years goes much further back than that.

Many of you may not know the story of Mom and Dad and I'm not sure how much of her early plan she actually told Dad (though he certainly knew there was one) but Mom shared a few inner secrets of her plan with me.

Mom and Dad first met when Mom was 2 and Dad was 3. They were in pre-school together. Though they did not begin their formal relationship at the time, they were the youngest in the class and so everyone naturally joked about pairing them up and mentioned what a cute couple they made. At the time, Mom had not made that decision herself but she certainly was not dismissing the idea.

Move way ahead ... to grade 5, the beginning of Mom's plan and thus the beginning of Dad's future. Dad had just switched schools from Alex Taylor and was now enrolled in Mom's school. She was a monitor (of course) and one of her duties was to welcome new students and help show them around. She tells me that she took one look at Dad on his first day of school and decided that she was not only going to take care of him that day but for the rest of their lives.

always be Mom's cottage in everyone's eyes and heart and Mom we promise that the screen door will always be closed behind us.

One day she said to me that she had been thinking about her life and one particular event kept cropping up over and over and it was an event that she paralleled to her own life.

Many years ago Mom and dad decided that we needed a fireplace in our home. They hired a very accomplished Italian stone layer to do the job. He put a big hole in the side of our house and had a pile of rocks of various sizes dumped on our front lawn. Each day he would show up at the house and would stare at the hole in its various stages of completion. He would then go outside and stare at the rocks and carefully pick one particular piece of stone. He would place the stone into the frame of the immerging fireplace and stand back at the end of the room. He would take a few swigs of his beer and stare long and hard at the newly placed stone and how it fit in to the existing scheme. He would take another swig or two of his beer and then he would exclaim: "IT IS GOOD ... IT IS VERY GOOD". And with each rock that he placed he would repeat the process till it was complete and he had built the masterpiece he had planned and accomplished. Mom said that she saw her life that way. She knew she wanted to put together a masterpiece and with each piece that she planned and implemented she was able to stand back and admire her work and at the end of her days she told me that she can say without hesitation: "IT IS GOOD ... IT IS VERY GOOD".