

Polly's Pondering

I can't remember now when I started referring to my grandmother as Grandma Mac. The obvious answer is that it had to have been sometime after she married her third husband, William MacAllister. Grandma Mac and I share several things in common. I loved her and she loved me. My name is Polly, and her nickname was Polly. Although I no longer know why – her real name is Millie. I write the letter "P" in cursive just like she did – on purpose. We both loved to sew – she taught me, just like she had her daughter – my mother. I remember many days sitting at the table in her apartment at her sewing machine drinking purple juice (a mixture of multiple types of juice). She didn't hover over me. She let me make my own mistakes and taught me how to use the seam ripper when the mistakes required starting over. We both love oatmeal, but mine is never as creamy. She cooked it in a little hot pot that was called a Poly Pot; I took one of those to college with me and made oatmeal and mac-n-cheese in it. Grandma and I were both proud owners of the "Polly Chest", a rustic thick wood hope chest that was made for her by her grandfather, I think. It had the word "POLLY" painted in white on the front that was painted black. That hope chest now has been passed down to my granddaughter Natalie who also loves to sew.

I miss Grandma Mac. I loved her dearly. But that doesn't mean that there weren't times she frustrated me. I remember driving to Texas from Missouri to pick up items from her former home in Fort Worth. She was moving up to Liberty Missouri to live near us. I think I was 14 at the time. I couldn't drive but I knew backing down the clover leaf overpass in the middle of the night was not legal and in fact, it was absolutely terrifying! I remember going with her to the grocery store. She was wearing slippers long before it was the trend to shuffle around in house shoes. And to make matters worse she would leave out her dentures. I loved her anyway. But when she would reach for her coin purse in that special hiding place known to women who don't want to carry a purse – while in house shoes and missing teeth – well you can imagine what that would do to a teenage girl; I was mortified. But I still loved her.

I remember another time when my parents were out of town and grandma was living with us, I had returned from a "College Winter Survival Retreat up on Pikes Peak" with two sprained ankles and torn cartilage in my left kneecap and soft tissue injury to my tailbone. We were on cross country skis and going down from the top of Pikes Peak when I hit an ice mogul, it caught the right ski forcing it over the left ski until both skis were facing backwards. It wouldn't have been that big a deal if my ski bindings had broken free like they are designed to do. Not this time. I ended up flat on my back with my ski tips behind my head and my feet facing the wrong direction. My boyfriend had come to visit. We were sitting on the couch with distance between us. We had no coffee table, so I had my left ankle on his knee to elevate my leg as the doctor had instructed. Grandma came up behind me and slapped my face hard. "Sit up like a young lady." I am not sure who was more shocked. She had never physically disciplined me before or after this event. And while I was stunned by her discipline and embarrassed beyond belief, I still loved her and I believed she still loved me.

This February as we celebrate Valentine's Day, I find myself remembering my grandma and the love we shared, and this has caused me to ponder anew how much God loves me. Even when I make mistakes, even when I do things that certainly must mortify Him, He still loves me. Even when I behave in ways that draw out His righteous discipline, I know He still loves me. His love for me and all of humanity is so great that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have ever lasting life. For he did not come into the world to condemn the world but that through him the world might be saved (John 3:16 and 17) In another place the Bible puts it this way: But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8).

My prayer for you is that you have special people in your life whose love has made the love of God more real and tangible. I mean, after all, we are only able to love because Christ first loved us (1 John 4:19).