

My mother was a party girl.
And she adored having fun.

Nurse Kathy liked to say,
"Your mother shows up for the party."

- Sneaking out for a late date as a teenager
- High tea in London
- Dinner and dancing in night clubs
- Caregiver Stephanie reporting, "Blanche has her sassy pants on tonight!"
- Enjoying her girlfriend network - filled with LOTS of telephone time
- Sitting with eyes closed at the kitchen table, raising her hand and saying "I'm in" when she heard Judy talking about going to Olga's for lunch.

Her trademark beaming smile and beautiful blue eyes captured the hearts of many. Children and animals naturally gravitated to her. And of course, Dad was smitten from the start. 50 years into marriage he wrote,

"Dear Blanche, You are the greatest, the best, the most thoughtful, very loving, most generous person I know - I love you now as much as ever and that is as much as possible!!"

She was a team player who shunned the lime-light, happy to be in a supporting role until... it came to competition! Match play golf, beach paddle tennis, duplicate bridge, and family coloring contests... Oh my - she was focused and determined, and loved the glory of a victory - including winning her flight and scoring an 82 in a Mother-Daughter golf tournament at age 78. She trumped that feat the following year with her Everglades Club hole-in-one.

Her faith proved invaluable during her life and she exemplified Christ principles. To me it seemed we had our very own Mother Teresa at hand. I wondered how she could be so kind at times.

She had deep faith in the Lord, especially in times of loss or distress. In recent years, when attending mass became arduous, she enjoyed her daily prayer books and pretty bedside rosaries. Caregiver Helen prayed 2 rosaries with Mom on her final day.

Speaking of challenges, I often wonder what it took to raise four daughters with a husband whose budding career meant lots of travel and coming home late for dinner. Kind of curls your hair imaging what some of the family dynamics were like during teenage dating years.

One of the things I most want to share is how beautifully Mother completed her life. She was very clear about what she wanted - especially wanting to sleep. Her daily mantra was, "Just give me 5 more minutes!" She had a smile on her face day in and day out. When she woke up in the morning and saw Caregiver Casey smiling at her, she said, "*Oh hi! It's nice to see you.*"

Three days before her death, she wanted to get out of bed and watch television. With elegance and mind-boggling strength (she had been in bed for days and had declined most food and water) she took hold of her walker, shunning the wheelchair.

After giving her walker strict instructions to behave, she departed for the den. Later in the evening, she enjoyed champagne and ice cream on the eve of her 92nd birthday. She spent her birthday resting in bed.

The day before she passed, she woke up early and alert. We took her outside to enjoy the sunshine, the beautiful flowers and the red maple leaves. She sat at the kitchen table giggling, sharing stories, and wanting to color just a little bit.

Next, time in the living room talking about her favorite pieces of art. Then she said she was ready to go to bed.

She told us, "*All is well, I am ready to go and everything is okay. There is nothing to worry about. Mother is here with me.*" With a big smile she turned to Caregiver Ashley and said sweetly, "*And I am going to miss you.*" She quietly and gently completed her life the way she lived it - with compassion, grace and gratitude.

It is time to wrap up this story package with a pretty ribbon and a bow as Mother would always do. It is time to acknowledge and celebrate Blanche's four daughters, Nancy, Judy, Roxanne, Barbara, who unwaveringly offered their time, their energy, their wisdom, their labor, and their love, to make sure she had the best of the best, felt safe, secure, happy, and treated like royalty.

Thank you sisters. I love you. 

My sisters and me - I celebrate us for a job well done, VERY well done. As Mother's Palm Beach friend Pat Johnson said recently,

"I hope you are all proud of what you did for your mother. She often told me she understood how much you were doing and she was extremely grateful."

Seven and a half years after her beloved Bill's passing, Blanche took the nonstop directly to heaven. She left us glorious memories of her life well-lived as well as her legacy. Her legacy of LOVE.

As St. Thomas of the Cross said,

*"In the evening of life,
we will be judged
by love alone".*

And, on that scale, Blanche's score is all 10's!!

Thank you Mom. I love you.  

- Barbara Striebel