

From Tom:

When I think of Mom, or as everyone else called her "Dot", I think of all the many things she was for us growing up. She was for sure the prettiest of all the moms. Many people told us that our mom looked like a movie star, and she did. But she was not "just another pretty face", as anyone who ever got on a tennis court or golf course with her could attest. Denny and I remember how she taught us (and Dad!) how to play tennis. In fact, she used to force us to go off to play tennis and "not come back before one hour", which we were always glad we did in later years. She had trophies from tournaments she had won in golf and tennis, and we found out that her nickname in school had been "Slugger Mickey" in testament to her softball talents.

Raising six children is a challenge that we with smaller families can only imagine, but Mom carried it off with amazing efficiency and grace. She was tough with us when called for (which was fairly often as I recall) and we knew well her "French temper" that she always said she got from her father's LaBarge side of the family. When she got really really mad with us, she would say "damnation anyway", which she insisted was not a cuss word (we were taught that cuss words were about the worst possible sin you could commit). The best example of her temper was when she beat up the mugger who attempted to rob her, a story that one of the other siblings tells.

But the other side of Mom was her soft nurturing and romantic, sentimental side. She always managed to put a great meal on the table every night for such a big family, so that brother Jim even published a cookbook with her recipes! She loved to dance, and even took up the impossible challenge of teaching me to dance. Her favorite song was "Stardust" and a favorite movie that she watched many times with Dad with tears in her eyes was "An Affair to Remember". I remember how she encouraged me in seventh grade to have the first "boy-girl party" of my class for my birthday, and how she stood up to Sister Remegia who objected strenuously to us all putting ourselves in the proximate occasion of sin. Mom told her that she was being silly, and went ahead with the party anyway, which thankfully broke the ice for more of the same.

I remember she always regretted not having been able to go to college, something that she made sure that all of us were able to do. Even though she had always been a very good student, her family was too poor and she had to work. But the good side of that was that she met Dad at work at Ralston Purina, for which all of us are grateful.