

Welcome to this year's St. Rose – McCarthy Alumni Night and on behalf of the entire Virginia Loogman Family, thank you so much for coming! We are honored by your presence and deeply grateful that we have this opportunity to share her memory and to share what we believe she has meant to Catholic Education here in Hanford.

What started at last year's Surf and Turf dinner bid for a beautiful granite bench, ended as a way to fulfill our father's wish of doing something special to honor our mother. Our father John, after he survived the car accident 26 years ago that led to our mother's early passing, had often said to us that he wished he would have done something to honor Virginia. But nothing ever seemed quite right.

So to honor his desire to honor our Mother, we had the bench designed to do just that. Her devotion to St. Therese was the first thing that could explain her character best: "Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice... doing the smallest right and doing it all for Love." It was when it was finished that, we saw in black and white, her influence and dedication to Catholic Education. She learned here, she taught here, and she sent her children and grandchildren here. She had a direct part in that.

While preparing for tonight, we spoke to a few people that remembered our mother and asked them to share with us some small thought or incident that they would be willing to share. And then it dawned on me at the Catholic Schools Mass on Sunday, how as an Alumni from the class of 1943, her education at St. Rose School had indeed prepared her to be: A Committed Catholic, A Confident Communicator, A Competent Problem Solver and A Concerned Citizen.

As a Committed Catholic

Mom's strong devotion to St. Therese taught us that we should do our best and to offer it up no matter how small. We observed her doing this at home, at the church, at the school and in the community. It was even said that it was Mom's Faith that inspired my grandmother to become a daily Communicant. EVERY Sunday, no matter if we were 11 miles into the hills on a dirt road, or just sort of sick, we were to be at Mass, thanking God for all of the rest of the week.

Msgr. Ronald Swett said, "Your mother was such a special woman, wife and mother. She was a real model of a joyful Christian woman who was always supportive of her family and the Catholic education of her children. I especially found her and your dad to be so welcoming of me as a young priest into Loogman family life and tremendously supportive of our high school youth group at St. Brigid."

And from that youth group came Fr. Michael Lastiri, who said, "I always remember your mom from her hospitality when a group of us used to meet at your house on Sunday nights. She was always pleasant and welcoming. I first remember your mom when I transferred to McCarthy School from St. Aloysius School in Tulare in second grade, as she was teaching kindergarten. Your brother John was sick, so we would pray for his recovery. My memories are always pleasant and warm when it came to your mom. And your dad, He was a real gentleman. Don't forget him in the midst of things." And our Mother would later tell us it was the prayers of those school children that really made the difference in my one month old brother's complete and miraculous recovery from spinal meningitis.

And our Dad....as Fr. Lastiri mentions.... BOTH of them taught us the Catholic Faith; the commitment it takes to live the Faith, and that it cannot be separated from anything in our lives. They taught, "Make good choices based on your Faith."

As a Confident Communicator

It was the Holy Spirit that led her. She always seemed to have just the right words to say. She communicated her Faith well. One of her favorite books was "The Imitation of Christ", by Thomas a' Kempis and one she shared with each of us – giving us a copy at just the right time in our lives, with just the right words inscribed.

Whether it be to our friends, our priests, or family she was graceful and kind. An "old" McCarthy student friend of my sister's made a special call to us just to tell us how much she loved our Mom and that she was so happy that she was being honored here. She was such a loving woman!

Mom also communicated well to others. A thank you note written to her principal supervisor (now Deacon Sousa) at her retirement from being a classroom aid was saved by him for over 26 years. He gave the note to us and it is here today on the picture board. It also communicated her love for students.

As a parent at McCarthy (or anytime) she stood up when needed. It was recently shared to me by another McCarthy parent that years ago there was some "issue" at the school being discussed at the Parent Club meeting, and that her own character was being questioned. Our mother stood up and came to that woman's defense, reminding everyone of what was really right. It took guts to stand up and clarify the issue and Mom communicated that in a kind but forthright way. It made a difference in her life and she remained grateful to our Mom.

And maybe that story had something to do with a former pastor's comment: "I was going through the files and found a letter that your Mom had written to the Pastor at the time. I got a chuckle out of how your Mom told it like it was, and wasn't afraid to make the point for her cause, and that she did it well."

A former World Book Customer, Rosie Cervantes says: "Your mom sold me a set of World Books. She had such good sales skills that I was happy to buy the deluxe set- the Burgundy Leather set with gold leaf. I bought them for my two girls and to this day, I still have the annual volumes to the set she sold me and I think of your Mom whenever I think of that encyclopedia set."

As a Concerned Citizen

Civil responsibility was always important to both of our parents. Mom worked at the polls when she could, and always made sure that she took us with her when she voted so that we knew how important voting was!

In justice matters such as pro-life, she instilled in us a respect for life and spared no details in what was really happening when women were considering abortions.

In the late 1970's she was asked to be on the Kings County Grand Jury and she happily obliged. She enjoyed serving immensely and took the job quite seriously. Later, the foreman (my boss at the time) would share with me that Mom would often speak up with a better idea of what needed to be done and she did a great job serving.

As a Competent Problem Solver

At Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in the early 1970's, the Sisters of the Holy Family needed a car for their pastoral work. The committee of two was formed, and Mom was one of those members. Marilyn Vierra, the other committee member, said it didn't matter to Mom that it was for work at the "other parish". They got started and discovered a grant to be had. Neither had ever written a grant application before, but that didn't stop them. Marilyn said, "Your Mom just got in there and did it. The application was a success and the nuns got their new car!"

And.... If there was a campaign to be won, Mom was at your service! She figured out creatively how to accomplish the outcome of winning the election! Student Body Government was one of her favorites! Each time one of us ran for an office – oh – the slogans we came up with!!! And, the campaign strategies!! Baking cookies for each high school student helped my brother win the race!! She loved helping us and worked til the wee hours for us. Sometimes, we would wake up to some special little touch that she added! There were many campaigns throughout the years, and she would be so proud to know her granddaughter Alyssa Askins leaves this generation of the Loogman legacy at St. Rose-McCarthy School as Student Body President.

This is only a glimpse of our mother's short 63 years on this earth, but we hope that her life might inspire you in some way to support Catholic Education and watch how our world can benefit!