

Eulogy – Mom

Edith Emily Alton

How do you define somebody like her?

You can do it by relationship. She was a lot of things to a lot of people in her long life:

Daughter

Sister

Cousin

Wife

Mother

Mother-in-law

Aunt

Grandmother

Great-Grandmother

Great-Great-Grandmother

You can do it by some of the jobs and roles she played in her life:

Berry picker

Sunday School Teacher

Artist

Telephone operator

Homemaker

Land Lady

Waitress

Carnival Game Operator (bet you didn't know that one)

Not to mention all her roles as a wife and mother: cook; seamstress; nurse; knitter (if that's a word); gardener; painter; loyal friend; encourager and confidant.

You could try to define her by personality:

Caring

Generous

Giving

Feisty

Fiercely Independent

Strong-willed

Vulnerable

Contradictory – she had a hermit gene which some of us have inherited, but still she could get lonely

How do you sum up somebody like Edith Alton?

It is all too easy to sanctify somebody after they have died. She was special, but we all know she was also human and, like all of us, less than perfect. For example she sure didn't like admitting she was wrong.

One time she went with my sister to the Simpson's Sear mail order outlet to pick up her order. Sears denied all knowledge of her order. She tore a strip off them and told them to cancel it and left the store with my sister. Outside she said, "Come on. I remember. I ordered it from Eaton's. Let's go there."

I was born when Mom was thirty-nine years old. I was a late blessing or as mom called it "an accident". But accident or not she was in my corner from the beginning. I was premature, but too big for the doctor's to believe her. She fought with the doctor's and prevailed and got me the treatment I needed. It was always good to have her in your corner. I think our teachers were afraid of her. And that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Recently Juanita and I lived a few months with our daughter, her husband and their two year old son. Two year boys are exhausting to be around. My dad was away a lot. I have no idea how mom survived me as a toddler when she was in her forties. But she survived and thrived. I remember waking up in my bed after falling asleep on the couch when I was 8 or 9 years old. She had carried my upstairs and put me to bed.

She did what she thought she should. Whether it was standing up to the school principal or taking my friends and me on the bus to the small boat harbor to fish for shiners.

She always wanted the best for us. She wanted to be the best mother she could be.

She wanted our dad to be the best father for her kids a man could be. Of course, he didn't always meet her standard, but as I told her once after he died "he was the only dad I'll ever have and he was good enough for me."

Well, perfect or not, Edith Emily Alton was my mom and she was good enough for me.

Was she good enough for God?

Did she say what we say are the right words?

I don't know that. That's above my pay grade.

It is what it is and it's too late to change either way.

It's not too late for those of us who are left to think about life and death and eternity.

With that in mind I'd like to read a letter I sent my Mom on her 99th birthday.

Hi Mom,

October 2008

This will get sent by e-mail and Judi can read it to you when she gets it.

Well. This week is the 99th anniversary of your birth. What a lot of changes you have seen in those 99 years. What a remarkable gift to have lived so long and to still be aware of it. It probably doesn't seem like much of a gift to you right about now does it? As amazing as you are and all the parts that work there are the parts that don't work and the general discomfort from some of the parts that don't work as well as they used to.

With the way you are not eating enough to maintain your weight you probably won't see a hundred. Don't argue about whether you are eating enough. The evidence is irrefutable – if you are losing weight you are not eating enough. Whether that is your deliberate way of taking care of the burden of getting this old or whether food just doesn't taste good anymore and you are forgetting to eat I don't know. It really doesn't matter. The result will be the same. You won't be around to talk to anymore. Just the thought of that makes me sad.

One thing that would help would be to know that we would eventually meet again in heaven. I don't know exactly how that works, but I know how the Bible says it works.

First we have to realize our needs, that we do not live good enough lives on our own to be good enough to go to heaven. The Ten Commandments tell us some things not to do like lying and stealing and murder and we are all guilty of some of those things even if it is only in a minor way. How many lies does it take to be a liar? How many things do we have to steal to be a thief and how much value does it have to have. And we have all lied

or stolen at some point in our lives. “Murder” you say. “I haven’t murdered.” Well, Jesus says if we hate somebody it is the same thing. I don’t think you can live with a spouse or raise teenagers to not at least have had the passing thought that would convict one of murder by that standard.

In any case – we are ALL, every one of us, sinners and as sinners we are not good enough to be in God’s presence and not fit for heaven. However, God in his mercy made a way for us to be cleansed from our sins. He did that by sending Jesus to earth to live as a sinless example and to die in our place as a substitute for the death we deserve. This means that eternal life – life in heaven after we die on this earth – became a gift from God that we could have merely by acknowledging that we have lived less than perfect lives (that we are sinners) and by praying to God and accepting Jesus as our saviour.

It sounds crazy – just way too easy and way too complex at the same time but that’s the way it is. If it isn’t that way and we act on it and are wrong we will never know it. If it is that way and we don’t act on it we will have all eternity for regrets.

Have a happy birthday and a happier eternity – pray to God – admit that you are a sinner and that you need his grace and ask Jesus to come into your heart.

Love
Paul

Well. My mom was pleased with getting the letter. I don’t know if she followed my formula or not, but I do know she prayed for us kids every night of our lives.

Her neighbor said last week that Edith is in heaven knitting hobo mitts for the angels.

That image comforts me.