

Jen was a smoker... for 65+ years! I disliked it and told her so. One June day about 5 years ago we took her to camp at Sandy Pond. She's on the deck over looking the water and I asked her if she wanted a cigarette. She said that would be nice. I lit it, and gave it to her. She took a couple of puffs and I said, "you keep smoking these things and they are going to kill ya". She turned to me and looking over her glasses said, "they sure are taking their time".

I think my mother was lucky. More to the point she thought I was lucky and often told me so. This reference was usually related to Bonnie. From the minute she met Bonnie there was no question that she was the one. Their relationship over 45 years was unwavering. Through mom's loving behavior it was easy for Bonnie to become a Catholic and simply enjoy all there is in life. Bonnie often refers to my mother as the perfect role model as a mother in law. Mom truly gained a daughter when we were married. And then, Tyler arrived and she was thrilled. He constantly impressed her. Mom was a fine example of Christian character as she was so generous in the basic tenets of our religion ... faith, hope and love.

Of course there are exceptions to everything, even patience. It only took her 80 years to finally settle in with her youthful love, John Downes. John knew my mother longer than anyone else. True Irish friendships are also unconditional. John and my mother assured us their companionship was blessed by God, through Father Bob Barrett, a long time family friend. Although living together is practiced by a younger generation, they openly shared their affection and respect for each other. While Mom knew John for a long time she admitted being a little taken aback when 8 adult children and full fledged families began showing up at the door looking for food and shelter. At this point in my life I knew I had it made.... I figured let the competition begin!

#### **WATER**

She recently spoke to me of her pleasure of listening to John and other family members play the piano and ukulele. Along with the musical notes came the songs. She marveled and so enjoyed the Downes tribe as to their musical abilities and the dance and sing alongs they provided.

My mother gave me everything a mother could give. Her lessons were important to me. Bonnie reminds me I must have forgotten some of these. There was nothing she wouldn't do for me and she was never selfish. I remember her breaking a thumb a day or two before a planned fishing trip to Cape Vincent. At an early age fishing was important to me and to prevent my disappointment we went anyway and she fished. As usual we all had a great time!

Another short story ... Bon and I showed up one weekend at the "Bryn Mawr Compound" to hang Xmas tree decorations and lights but weren't allowed. However, when Catherine, one of John's daughters, arrived the next day in her Evan Picone slacks, mom instructed her to go outside get on the ladder and string lights immediately. Catherine not knowing what to say just did it.

Jen worried too much about me. She was proud of me more than I'll ever deserve. She wanted the best for me and our families. Although she told us of how proud she was of us Downes's and Will children, and all that we have, in my opinion she was more successful.

In closing, Bonnie and I would like to thank the professional staff at Van Duyn Nursing Home for their support and care over the past several years. Most importantly, I also want to thank the Downes family for all they did for my mother. They shared many close moments through conversation and they unknowingly stimulated my mother's memory which kept her youthful in mind and spirit. In addition, the seven girls and Eddie were so gracious and generous in seeing my mom had fresh roses every week... I mean every week, for nearly seven years, while she was at Van Duyn. Thank you all, for caring and giving her so much. Thank you for loving her as deeply as you did and the years of happiness through your visits. Thank you Dan McMahon for providing her with Holy Communion and the magazines every week. She considered your visits to be very important.

It's tough to summarize a life of 98 years. It's tougher to loose a mother as many in this church can attest. She is now at rest without pain and having good thoughts. I'm one of those who believe she's somehow finding a way to bring my dad and John up to speed as to all that has happened since they have been gone.

So, Virginia Patricia McGarry Will, Erin Go Braugh, which in this context means Irish Forever!!

Thank you Mom and May God Bless you and keep you.