

Moms

I am blessed to have one of the finest mothers ever known and in addition to my earth mom, the finest mother ever. One was the lady who carried me in her womb and brought me into this world with a lot of help from my dad and the other is the Mother of us all.

Patti, or PAL, as she preferred (P for Patti and AL for Big Al, her beloved of fifty-two years) was a classic Irish Catholic Mom. Her devotion to our Lady, the 'finest mother ever', was the stuff of legends. Yes, we were the "Irish" Catholic family, kneeling down to say the rosary during lent before every dinner and sitting up saying it the rest of the year. Her faith in our Master through the intercession of our Lady is the stuff of legends.

Must have worked, because my Dad survived three heart attacks (our Master took him with the fourth), veins in his legs replaced, innumerable squamous cell carcinoma's probably from exposure to Hiroshima when 'the bomb' went off less than twenty-five miles from his POW camp, a host of other health issues including congestive heart failure (from Beri Beri in another prison camp) where it was functioning at ten percent years before he died. His cardiologist was amazed he could even walk into his office (especially since he was pruning apple trees the day before their last and final visit). Yes, mom's protection of him could be labeled as something **greater than fierce**, as was her care of my only sis (and sibling) and me. It was entirely fueled by her incredible faith in our God in all His Triune-ness. She went to mass daily most of her life and the number of rosaries she said, if counted, would certainly make the Guinness Book of World Records by a single person.

I was with Mom when she made the Great Leap. I'll tell you the part about how Hospice offered my sister and I a 'respite weekend', where they brought her to their facility on a Friday and we'd pick her up on Monday. She was in New Mexico at the time, fittingly so since **it is** the Land of Enchantment and my Dad's favorite place despite being the reason he ended up as a 'guest of the Emperor' (the Japanese Emperor) for three and a half years. Other than the interview by Lt. Colonel Carol 'Shane' Eric that Mary transcribed into the book *Faithful* and my sister edited, the sentence about being 'the guest if the Emperor' was the only thing he ever talked about regarding WWII. Eighteen hundred men in his New Mexico Unit National Guard Calvary Unit (drafted by then President Roosevelt) and illegally shipped by him to the Philippines in September of 1941, three months before Pearl Harbor. Eight hundred returned home. Many of those that did return did not last long. Health issues, some self-inflicted like solace in the bottle, took them early. Pop made seventy-nine, thanks to Mom.

I remember when they came to pick Mom up for 'the weekend'. She'd been in a coma since Mother's Day, the day of her last coherent conversation, which was with my daughter, her only granddaughter. It was the Friday after. One of the emergency personnel, a very kind lady, told me, "Now don't you worry if she does not make it. The ride in the ambulance sometimes 'takes them to be with Him.'" Well, she made it. But after I had been there less than an hour the facility head doctor came in and asked me, "Do you have any other family close by?"

I said, "Yes, my sister works in Rio Rancho as the Assistant City Prosecutor about a half hour away."

She said to me, "Well, your mom is not leaving here. I've admitted her permanently and you'd better call you sister and get her here as soon as possible."

My sister arrived in under thirty minutes. Thirty minutes after that my mom suddenly woke from that rasping breath, commonly known as the death gasp that had been going on for days, and first turned to my sister with a smile that only a mom can give and then she turned to look at me. As I've mentioned before her eyes were filled with countless stars. And then she leapt. At 3:17 PM, the feast of the great saint, Patrick. On a Friday, when all truly wonderful people die, like Him.

I've had the great fortune to meet great mom's in my life, many after my Mom went to be with Him and Big Al. I know they are great moms because I witness how their children truly love them by the calls and actions from a five year old to a forty year old. By their children and how they treat their moms, I know their mom's are fabulous loving mothers, with the fierceness of my own earth mom.

Blessed be all mothers. They bring us to life. They are the true caregivers of the gift given to them by Him, to watch over and raise for Him and His Will until their dying breath.

Amen.