

My Mom
Eleanora (Ellie) Louise Otto Halfman (1924-2015)
August 2015

I heard that some people at UniLu were going to hold a special remembrance gathering for my Mom this coming Sunday, August 30, 2015. She would have loved that. She wouldn't have wanted anything fancy, just something down-to-earth from people who had cared about her. If you don't mind, I would like to share a few words of my own memories of my Mom.

My strongest overwhelming memory of my Mom is that she was always giving to others with absolutely no expectation of getting anything back. For her family, she created a warm, kind, comfortable environment where she always supported all our adventures. For others, she concentrated on those who were less fortunate than she was. When I was young, she and my Dad took in refugee families from Hungary (through UniLu) and let them live in our house until they found jobs and housing for themselves. When we lived in India, she volunteered at a poor hospital, where she mopped all the floors and whitewashed all the walls. She spent hours making pillowcases on an old handcrank sewing machine that I assisted her with from time to time. She also helped in the operating room, once holding a flashlight for the doctor when the electricity went out. In the States, after she got her nursing degree while I was in school, she spent long hours talking to patients and giving them backrubs. Perhaps one of her most notable acts of giving was cooking and baking for the homeless through church programs for many, many years. When she no longer was driving into Cambridge for the meals programs, she continued to bake countless number of pies, cakes, cookies, and cupcakes. She did this until she was 88 yrs. old!!!

In spite of all her giving to others, she never forgot her family. She was deeply in love with my Dad. She was always there to tell us she loved us and to support us in any way. When we were adults, she and my Dad had family reunions every summer up at the family cottage on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. The grandkids especially loved this. My parents also enjoyed hosting many outings in NH for UniLu and MIT students throughout the years.

As she and Dad got older, she plunged into the gardens of their retirement place, Brookhaven. She planted a beautiful garden of flowers for the enjoyment for those in the nursing home section. Brookhaven named the nursing home, "Garden View", in honor of her garden. In her last year, she moved in there and enjoyed a view out a window of peonies that originally came from my grandparent's garden.

In one of our last conversations, she told me she hoped others would remember well of her. I told her that there was no doubt that they would. The night before she died, I held her hand and told her I loved her. She was suffering at the time, but opened her eyes and raised her eyebrows, and with a faint smile she mouthed back, "I love you too." I will never forget my Mom and I will treasure all the fond memories that I have of her in my heart where they will never ever be lost.

I love you, Mom,

Sue Halfman-Dooley