

From Patti Wilkes, her only daughter:

Mom was the family organizer and with 6 kids that was a full time job. I never thought about it much until I had my own family with only one child, how effortlessly she successfully accomplished this task. We all had a full breakfast every morning and went to our respective schools by either walking, getting a ride, or in my older brothers' cases, hitchhiking to St. Louis U. High. When I would arrive home, Mom would be ironing - mostly shirts and sheets, doing laundry, or offering us a snack. A full dinner was served every night (No fast food). She always managed to get her chores done before dinner and was able to relax (at least I thought so), play games, help with our homework, have a bowl of icecream, watch a favorite TV show or old movie before the bedtime routine would come into play. Baths, showers, washing my hair in the sink with a vinegar rinse, setting my hair with pin-curls until straight hair came into style, and tucking me in, often with a fairy tale book or Dr. Seuss book when I was younger.

I remember Mom giving me her China baby doll that she had saved from her own childhood. I think I was 6 or 7. She allowed me to sleep with it and one morning it had fallen off the bed and the head was cracked open. I was devastated. I could tell Mom was sad, but not mad. I think she felt more upset for me than for the loss of the doll and I remember her hugging me while I cried. Material things were not that important to my mother. Feelings were. Trust was. Honesty was. She gave all of us a lot of free reign as far as curfews or trusting us about what our plans were with our friends during our teen years. As teens during the 60's and 70's, I doubt if any of us were always completely honest, but most the time we were, because we didn't want to betray that trust, deep down.

Mom, I think at one time would have liked to explore art more, drawing in particular. She was very good at drawing figures. At one time, we took a life drawing class together, but quit early because of me. I often regretted that because I think Mom was actually enjoying it and her sketches were really quite good, but at the time I think I may have been embarrassed with the live models and my mother sitting right next to me, despite my difficulties with the task at hand.

Mom was a good seamstress and for a long time made many of my clothes and always made most of the baby clothes for all of us. She taught this skill to me. She would even darn our socks with this little wooden "darners" (don't know what they are called) until I suppose it was just easier to buy new socks (or they got to the point where they could afford to buy new socks). She was my dependable tennis partner, as my 5 older brothers were always much too busy to play tennis with me (probably didn't have the patience!). She was also an excellent swimmer and would water ski at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Mom enjoyed family and trusted friends. She was always there for us.