

THE TIRRELL TRIBE – EPILOGUE

April 2017

Hi all,

It doesn't seem possible that only 4 months ago I was writing to you all to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year. This time I write to tell you that Mom (Margaret – Peg) Tirrell went to be with her savior in the early morning hours of April 17, 2017. Mom fought 7+ years with Alzheimer's Disease. Despite the disease, she remained her sunny self always gracious to those who would help her. We were blessed to have wonderful homemakers and personal care assistants from Caledonia Home Health as well as the services of retired nurse Karol Parker, who lived with Mom and I and was on call anytime that I or the CHIC girls couldn't be around. Without her knowledge and care, I would have been lost as to how to keep Mom here at home.



Ava helping Mom

To catch you up, Mom had a lovely Christmas attending Christmas Eve service and enjoying the music, candles and lights. Grandson Paul was home and contributed to the service as well as First Night. Mom heard us play the organ and piano duets for our early set before she and Karol

went home. In spite of the cold and snow, Mom continued to come to church on Sundays and enjoy the companionship of the others in attendance, the music, and the ritual. Understanding was not always the best.

In March we had a couple of cold-snowy Sundays and Mom stayed home from church. It was taking her quite a while to walk from the car to the church door and I didn't want her to fall or get too chilled. Walking was beginning to really tire her out. We

were using the wheel chair at home – not to sit in but for her to push and take the stuffed animals for a ride. She was able to get around this way although getting out of a chair was impossible without



assistance. She could still feed herself finger food but slowly we had to change to feeding her using Stage 3 and 2 baby food. As I

said before, she remained happy always brightening up when someone came into her line of sight.

At the end of March, getting her up to the bathroom or out of bed was only done with assistance. She was becoming very tired and wanting to sleep despite stimulation. At this point we called her doctor to see about hospice. The requirements for being on hospice with only Alzheimer's are very strict, however her labored breathing, inability to take care of herself, all indicated she was declining. After the nurse and doctor evaluations, which of course being her gracious self, she showed off and talked relatively coherently, she was signed into home care hospice. The hospice nurses were to come 2 – 3 time a week and of course were on call at any time, day or night, to help with Mom or those of us here taking care of her.



Palm Sunday, April 9, Mom wouldn't let me go play for church. She would get agitated when I moved to leave my position of sitting on the



bed with her. Thank heavens there are wonderful people at church who can fill in at the last moment. Several times during Holy week we were sure she was ready to leave us but... Scott flew in Tuesday and rented a car to come up and she rallied again. Gail continued her pillow

talks via the cellphone (during Gail's lunch time) and Mom would smile upon hearing her voice. She was now in bed all the time and we needed to turn her regularly to prevent bed sores. I spent most of my non-working hours on the bed either holding her or having her nestled beside me. This week was also Gilman Middle School's musical (written by the director and science teacher – however the music he gave me was only the melody and I needed to create the accompaniment!), so I was in and out as I played for them. Mom had a quiet day on Thursday, our performance day, allowing me to do the dress rehearsal and performance relatively stress free.



Good Friday, April 14, Mom stopped drinking – she couldn't make her throat swallow. We had to be careful with any liquid as it could choke her or she might aspirate it. This is when mom started to labor – that's the only way to describe it. She was very sensitive to touch and movements, her communication skills were limited to facial

responses – mainly grimaces for pain but also smiles when she heard talking or singing. She relaxes as Scott, Karol, and I talked to and around her. Gail continued with her cellphone talks usually getting a smile and eyes half to full open. Easter Sunday, she allowed me to play at church and in the afternoon, Gail played piano and recorder for her over the phone. At this point, mom had little response except heavy breathing and trying to get the secretions out of her throat. To spare you the details she began "labor-like" breathing in the afternoon and finally after running more than a marathon, she stopped at 1:47 Monday morning.



Now, it is over and she is at peace. The family will be Celebrating her long, happy life on Friday, May 12, 2017 at 4 pm at the United Community Church, UCC (formerly North Congregational Church), 1325 Main St., St. Johnsbury, VT. We invite you all to attend either in body or spirit. Following the service and reception, there will be a square and round dance (for novice and experienced dancers) at Waterford School, 276 Duck Pond Rd, Waterford, VT at 7 pm. All callers and cuers are welcome to call/cue a tip as we enjoy the activity that Mom and Dad loved so much.

We, Scott, Gail and I hope that you will not lose touch with us as we have all enjoyed being a part of Mom and Dad's great family. Remember them both as the happy, gracious, fun loving couple who wanted everyone to be a part of the Square and Round Dance activity.

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