

Eulogy for Mary Remley

October 12, 2005

Presented by Patty Torba

Mary Helen Elizabeth Ann Diggins Remley. Mary Helen Elizabeth Ann Diggins Remley. I've been tempted over the years to return to see if this jump rope ditty had been passed to future generations of recess jump ropers at Glen Oak Elementary School. I know that my mother Mary Helen Elizabeth Ann Diggins Remley leaves a legacy that will nurture and guide us until we see her again in heaven.

My mother's full name prompted a teasing taunt from her brother Al. He said: "Mary go to hell and Dig!" Mom often remarked: "I can't go to hell because I can't take the heat."

Mary Helen Diggins was born at home on July 4, 1930 in Kenmare, North Dakota to Francis Marion and Gertrude Diggins. Mom was one of 8 children, which included 6 brothers and 1 sister. Mom's childhood was filled with music, creative inventions from her brothers and outdoor adventures. Mom's mother insisted that she practice the piano at certain times. Mom would convince her sister Trudy to "practice" for her. Trudy willingly obliged and made purposeful mistakes to fool their mom.

We remember the stories she told us about her childhood. Mom and her siblings would put freshly baked potatoes in their coats to keep warm on their way to school and later eat the potatoes for lunch. One teacher would tap students' fingers if they did something bad. Mom bragged that she and her school friend Irene Smith knew how to pull their hands away in time. Can you imagine trudging through 6 feet of snow? At the age of eleven, mom had her tonsils taken out by her uncle who was a doctor. Mom climbed out of the window so she could play with her brothers. Her uncle put her tonsils in a jar.

And that chicken with its head chopped off? It's still running around.

Mom had a loyal devotion and dependence on Mary, the mother of Jesus. The Blessed Mother was her role model for motherhood and womankind. I remember when mom told me that her mother, our grandma Diggins, thought that I should have been called "Mary" and not "Patty". This is because I was born on September 8th, which was the birthday of the Blessed Mother. When I learned that "Mary" meant "suffering", I was only too glad to have my younger sister Mary have that name.

My father and mother Edgar and Mary Remley celebrated more than 55 years of marriage. Edgar and Mary Remley are pillars of this church: St. Louise de Marillac. This church began when the population of Catholics east of Sacred Heart parish boomed and a need for a new church was met. My father and brother Mike helped to build the first rectory that housed the first pastor: Father James Walsh. My mother became the founding director of CCD for St. Louise de Marillac- organizing CCD to be taught in garages, living rooms and other available meeting places while the church was being built. Father Walsh would often come over and visit with mom and dad as St. Louise was being built from the ground up. My mother's heart yearned for the faith formation of the children.

With 8 kids and no clothes dryer, many backyard gatherings for CCD and Church business took place with the noise of sheets, diapers, and various apparel flapping in the wind on rows and rows of clothes lines.- drying in the sun. The Remley kids can honestly say that St. Louise got to know us inside out. Father Walsh told my mother that the Remley kids would be the first on the list for the new Catholic school.

I remember studying for First Communion with Eloise Ball in her living room. My mother helped to create a beautiful First Communion day for many children. Mom's love for the Eucharist was the cornerstone of my own faith development. The Blessed Sacrament has remained the purest expression of divine love.

Mom loved the women in her rosary group. She would call us and tell us her rosary group was

praying for us. The women in this group brought mom much joy, as well as reinforcement in her own faith. When my brother Johnny was dying from osteomyelitis, my mother entrusted Johnny into the arms of the Blessed Mother. Johnny is still with us today. My mom always told us kids in times of trial and crisis- pray to Mary. Mary especially loves children and will intercede for them.

My mother died on October 7, 2005 on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

Can you imagine the reception in heaven by the same angel who greeted that other Mary?

“Rejoice O highly favored daughter - Mary! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women. Do not fear Mary. You have found favor with God. Those of us who came from her womb are so very blessed.

My mother’s biggest joy and mission in life were her devoted husband Ed, 8 children, 14 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. We are able to carry on with the love and knowledge that we too will be greeted in heaven one day.

Mom tried to be present at the births of her grandchildren and often bragged how beautiful her children and grandchildren were. “It’s in the genes”, she would say.

Mom was raised with simplicity; taught us about thrift, not wasting, and making do. She saved boxes year round. Many boxes were recycled time after time for gifts and storage and mailing use. It’s a good thing my dad built us a home with many rooms and a few attics.

Mom’s gravy, pumpkin bread and baked beans are irreplaceable. Mom saved up coffee cans for months and used them to bake loaves of pumpkin bread for everyone at Christmas. She then gave the cans to dad to store his garage supplies.

Mom taught herself how to sew. She made clothes for dad and all of us, including beautiful formal dresses and a matching shirt and jumper for Leo and myself.

Mom supported us in our careers, marriages and dreams. Mom was a loyal democrat, advocating for the health, education and welfare of all Americans - especially those with disabilities and poverty. If you were Republican or an opponent in cards, you were a “Dirty Dog”.

Mom’s sayings still continue to tickle our ears.

“Ain’t life grand”

“We’re off like a herd of turtles”

“I’ve got to see a dog about a man”

“Good stuff.”

“Clem Kadittlehopper”

“Susie, Patty, Mary, Cathy, Liz: you look like my mother”

“Don’t I have beautiful children and grandchildren”

Traditions were important to her as well as the thoughtful ways she expressed her love to us. Dad says that kids were her life. She loved being a grandma.

My mother’s fidelity to dad, her husband was a given. Mom liked to brag about him and frequently encouraged us to express our love to him.

A poignant memory of three years ago comforts us. On Thanksgiving Day, at dinner, each family member had the opportunity to share what they were thankful for in the previous year. When it was Mom’s turn, she said “I don’t know what I’m thankful for, but I do know that I pray that I go before Ed, as I can’t imagine going on without him”.

Well done good and faithful servant. Thank you Mom for showing us the way. I love you momma.