

Tributes to our mother, Elizabeth Ann Sovis

**Delivered at a memorial service held at Central Baptist Church,
Edmonton, Alberta, on July 21, 2012**

Edmund S. Auger

When I was a young boy, my brothers and I often played street hockey in our back alley. We always had a great time but the only thing that ever spoiled our fun was the neighbour across the alley. He was convinced that we were responsible for the dents in his metal garage doors and he used any opportunity he could to threaten us.

On one particular occasion, he approached me and my brothers and began yelling about how he was going to teach us a lesson. We weren't particularly interested in learning that lesson and we quickly ran into our backyard to hide. Luckily for us, our Mom happened to be in the backyard working in her garden. I can't remember exactly what she was doing, whether it was planting or weeding, but I do remember that she was using her garden trowel. When she caught wind of what was happening, she ran out into the alley to confront our neighbour. But he saw her coming, and he saw the fire in her eyes and he certainly saw the trowel that was still tightly gripped in the hand that she was furiously waving at him. He quickly retreated to his car, locked the doors and sped off down the alley.

Mom chased the car on foot, running at speeds that I hadn't thought possible. And she didn't give up until the car had turned the corner and was out of sight. As Mom returned to her garden, my brothers and I looked up at her in awe and we realized that our Mom was even more amazing than we had previously understood. She was our steadfast protector and our hero.

My Mom did everything she could to keep us safe but growing boys are accident-prone and when there are three boys in the family, there are lots of trips to the hospital. And when one of those boys is me, there are even more trips to the hospital. Luckily my Mom was a talented self-taught nurse and she did just the right things to get us back into good spirits and good health.

My last major accident was a head injury that landed me in an Ontario hospital for a week with 21 stitches, an infection and a nasty concussion. My Mom was at my side the entire time. She cancelled her flight home, took time off work and she stayed with me until she was completely certain that I was going to be okay. Once again I think of her in awe because I know she was prepared to do whatever it took to see me return to good health. She was my protector.

You know, even though I have a tendency to be a little reckless and I've made some poor decisions regarding my safety, I've always ended up okay. My Mom, in contrast, was not reckless and she made great decisions. But on her last adventure, she had an accident and she didn't end up okay. I just wish I could have been there to take care of her and to be her protector.

It has been the most amazing blessing to have loved and to have been loved by my Mom for the past 32 years. I just wish it didn't have to end so soon.

Gregory A. Auger

When I was in kindergarten, I remember having a friend over. We were playing in the living room while my Mom prepared lunch, and we had a heated argument. I had told my friend that he was in for a treat because my mother was the greatest cook in the world. He was skeptical, maintaining that no matter how good she was, there was someone, somewhere in the world, who was better. I strongly disagreed.

She was a hero to me, a larger than life figure, someone capable of doing anything. But I was a child, and I imagine that this kind of attitude isn't uncommon. But the amazing thing is that, as I got older and got to know my mother better, she became more impressive to me and not less. As an adult, I am even more in awe of her now than I ever was as a child.

I remember a few years ago being in the kitchen while my parent discussed getting a new stove. The old stove, hardly five years old, had ceased to work and Mom wanted a new one. Dad thought that we should just have the old one repaired. They both presented their views, weighing the pros and cons in even voices. No consensus was reached, but they agreed that they would talk about it again later.

Afterwards, Mom walked over to me and apologized.

- "I'm so sorry that you had to see us fight", she said.

I can remember the shock that I felt. No one could possibly consider such a respectful exchange a "fight". No matter how hard I try, I can't remember any instance where Mum and Dad had ever fought with one another. Their relationship was always solid, and I just took it for granted.

And it wasn't that Mom didn't have a temper. She did. She used to proudly describe how she had broken a chalkboard over a bully's head as a child. And my brothers and I still boast of how she chased a mean neighbour down the alley with a trowel after he had threatened violence. As for myself, I have always been able to provoke her into a stormy reaction.

But whatever I did, whatever the crisis, whatever the difficulty, I always knew that Mom was there for me. Mom was an inspiration and a friend and I am going to miss her so much.

Richard K. T. Auger

Throughout her life, Mom was always an adventurer. She spent most of her free time cross-country skiing, canoeing, fishing, hiking, cycling or going for walks with my Dad. My Mom and Dad have gone on hiking trips together since they were in high school.

In her early twenties, she spent over a year in the Yukon, including a three-month canoe trip. During this time, she developed a vast knowledge of birds, animals and edible wild plants. On the canoe trip, her diet often included wild berries, plants and fish, because she had run out of supplies and the towns in the Yukon were few and far between.

Even after becoming a mother, she would go cross-country skiing with baby Edmund, take us for cycling trips in the national parks and plan amazing multi-day backpacking trips for the whole family.

While we were growing up, Mom fought long and hard to instill a love and respect for nature in our hearts. In the winters, she would sometimes plan overnight cross-country ski trips for us. But when it came time to leave, she would be faced with responses such as “I’M NOT GOING” and “YOU CAN’T MAKE ME”. After much arguing and persuading, she would convince us to go. However, oftentimes during our trip, one of us would make a fuss, occasionally throwing our ski poles into the trees in protest. But now, we look back on all of those trips with fond memories and I have re-done a lot of the same trips that Mom once “forced” on us when we were young.

My Mom was a very generous person. She was kind and hospitable to everyone. Years ago, my parents started making waffles after Church for anyone who wanted to drop by. My Mom would tell me before Church:

- “We are having waffles, please invite some people to come but keep the numbers around twelve or so.”

Every Sunday, however, people would show up in droves sometimes over twenty people. My Mom would never complain or get upset. She would just work harder to make sure there was enough for everyone and then she would have a great time. I did try not to invite too many people. But everybody just loved the waffles and loved my parents so much that they would just show up.

Mom was very driven and ambitious in her career but her family came first. She had a reverence and a love for God but also a great humility in her heart to admit that she did not have it all figured out.

Mom, thank you for passing on your passion for the outdoors to me. This is a part of you that will live in me forever. Thank you for never giving up on me when I would get thrown out of school or when my teachers had given up hope. Thank you for pushing me to do my best, but loving me regardless of my decisions. I realize how blessed I was to have you as a mother for all those years, but that does not make this any easier. You would have made an amazing Grandma. I love you so much and I will never forget you.