

Memories of Jack W. Hoffman

Electronic mail message from Joel Hoffman

I share with you this letter my dad wrote to my grandmother. They're sorely missed and lovingly remembered.

Dear Mom,

God's gifts come in many packages; all are precious treasures, but each of us has favourites.

As you know, October is one of mine.. as it is yours. Although it visits us on soft steps, it is wrapped in blazing ribbons of color that shout attention from tree top to meadow. Its splendor is no more evident than here in Indian River where color is dazzling, where crisp mornings and evenings are invigorating, and where even in rain the afternoons are a joy beneath the canopy of trees that surround our office and home.

But this rainy afternoon, having just learned that you are seriously ill, the rustling of colorful leaves remind me that the palate of autumn comes and goes to come again another year, but a man's mother comes and stays but once.

So many memories come rushing to mind.. the time you walked me to kindergarten at Cody, kissed away my tears and persuaded me to go inside; the many times you smothered my cuts and bruises with iodine, plastered musterole on my chest and forced castor oil down my throat until I feared the medicine more than being sick; the time you supported me when I begged Dad and finally got a puppy; the many times on summer evenings we walked to the diamond at McKinley and watched the ballgames; the times when we drove to the farm or when you saved your pennies and took me to see the 10-cent matinees at the Lincoln Theater; the many times you forced me to stand at the blackboard and recite my multiplication tables (which I still don't know).

The time you kissed me goodbye when I went off to the Army, forcing me to take along a paper sack of sandwiches, sweater and long underwear (which I quickly stuffed under the bus seat for fear my macho image would be ruined); the time I told you I was getting married and you met Joan for the first time and said, "I like her Jack,"; and the times you spoiled our first baby... and our second, and third, fourth, fifth, and sixth... and then asked seriously, "Do you know what causes children, Jack?" the many times you miraculously appeared with a car load of groceries at the University of Michigan just when Joan and I were beginning to worry about what we would feed our children.

But mostly, Mom, I remember coming home... home to those wonderful smells and tastes of your kitchen and the marvels you produced there... the pies and cakes, the baking German ryebread and rolls and doughnuts, the cabbage rolls, the mountains of potatoes, the stuffings, the absolutely gorgeous roasting chickens and turkeys and oh, my, your homemade chicken noodle soup.

Mothers are more precious than autumn.

So as your oldest son prays for your recovery he thanks God for giving him a mother who:

Grew up on a farm and taught her children to love and respect the country and those who provide the food for our table. Toiled in the fields, on bleeding knees, to thin sugar beets, and taught her children to work hard at any task they encounter. Married a man of like frugal character and German Russian heritage, and taught her children moderation and appreciation of their heritage. Managed to carry on in her grief of losing five and six year olds to scarlet fever, in the span of a month, and taught her remaining children to love God and the life He gives them.

Survived a Depression that cost her husband's job and their home and taught her children to take nothing for granted.

Prodded and cajoled, and taught her children to understand the importance of an education.

Scolded, punished and taught her children to respect the importance of rules.

Coddled, defended and loved, and taught her children to love those dearest to them.

I love you Mom, more deeply than all of the 54 favorite Octobers that have visited me. And right now, I could go for some of your chicken noodle soup, so get well soon.