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## Saying Goodbye to Grandma

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After a long hard battle with a multiplicity of diseases, my Grams succumbed to cancer in November of 2014. Several times I'd gotten the call that she wasn't going to make it through the night and I should rush out to Texas to bid her farewell. Many times I'd packed an overnight bag, grabbed my son and took the trip only to have Grams to pull through. I'd breathe a sigh of relief knowing we'd cheated death one more time.

Our visits would be exceptional. Her long-term memory was amazing and although she had trouble recounting events from day to day, she would always run down a list of her favorite people and memories when I'd come to town to visit with her. There was never a time that she didn't recognize me, and there was never a time when I'd see her- even after she was moved to a hospice center- that we wouldn't sing all of her favorite songs together.

That day, the day that I'll never forget, Grams left all her pain behind to this world. She had been a vibrant woman who'd raised nine kids with a country boy from Mississippi. Grams had run a business, been a teacher (like me), served as a pastor's wife, and been an amazing cook to name a few things. Above all, she was my hero. But, this time, my 93-year-old hero was no longer fighting to stay around for her family. She was finally at peace, no longer in pain, and at rest.

I was now left to make sense of it all.

For almost a week, I made preparations to leave and continued to work and to come to classes at LSU. It would have been what she'd wanted. I kept moving at the speed of life without much regard for how my life would be different now that she was gone.

I was given the task of writing a tribute from the grandchildren to read at the services. It was the moment that I began to write that tears drenched my paper. She was really gone, and

somehow I needed to pull it together to write the most exquisitely commemorative piece in her honor.

There I was at the podium. I recounted the beautiful memories of sneaking food in the basket at the grocery store with my cousins. I spoke about bribing my grandfather for his extra change to buy more snacks. I told the congregants how my Grams played basketball and taught elementary school like I do now. I even told them how she would sit in my Sunday School class as a student and learn from me as I taught. Then, I read my poetic tribute in strength knowing that she still lived in me.

When I reflect, my mind travels back  
To a space where our journey began  
My heart is overwhelmed with gladness  
For 93 years on earth you were here

An uncompromising strength  
An unwavering faith  
A gentle spirit you possessed  
To each of us you always gave the very best of yourself

No matter what the obstacle  
Or how seemingly insurmountable the task  
At the same time every night  
You could be found bedside, kneeling, taking your requests to the Lord in prayer

Sometimes I'd stop to listen  
Silently at your door  
And when I heard you call my name to Him  
I loved you even more

Your wisdom was unparalleled  
Like nothing I ever knew  
I can only hope that someday  
I'll be as wise as you

In each meal you prepared through  
Nine children, grandchildren and great-grands  
You never ceased to create  
Meaningful moments for all of us to share

Through your discipline we all learned patience  
Though at first it caused us pain  
But now in retrospect we see from  
Hard lessons how much we've all gained

How you believed in education and you started with yourself  
You gave us an impeccable example  
As an elementary school teacher, business owner, and friend

Benevolent & giving  
Sacrificial at your own expense  
You'd give the last of everything  
You supported others through thick and thin

Oh! ...and how you trusted your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ  
Your faith and trust in Him was evident  
Through all the moments of your beautiful life

A daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother  
Teacher, psalmist, philanthropist, and friend  
A nurturer, cook, disciplinarian  
A faithful believer to the very end

Your life lends an elegant and graceful example  
Of the race left for us to run  
And on this day we declare how proud we are of all you've done

So now as we endure our humanity's sorrow  
Which is normal to feel  
We do not weep as if there was no hope for if in Christ  
We will see you again

But until that day our eyes shall behold you  
Our hearts towards heaven we lift in praise  
For the life well lived of a virtuous woman and a firm foundation laid

Carry we now the mantle  
To teach generations to come  
Always remembering to give God the glory  
For the things that He has done