

“That’s who my momma was”

Resourceful and smart:

- Was financially responsible, always paid her bills on time, saved money and spent it wisely (although sometimes impulsively)
- Anticipated her first divorce and financially prepared for it in advance (a great lesson for me to always take care of myself financially)
- Supported my father through his schooling and early law career. Took classes to better herself after her first divorce

Fiercely independent:

- Went out and promptly bought tools when she was single - she thought she could rule the world if she owned a good set of tools, especially a drill (which she jokingly called a “drill-er”, a name that I believe my grandmother (her mother) may have given it).
- She loved WD-40 and was convinced you could fix nearly anything w/ it, she would regularly fix squeaky doors in my house when she visited.
- When she asked for the small utility trailer in the divorce from my father and he asked her what she was going to do with that because she couldn’t back a trailer, she hooked the trailer up to her vehicle and taught herself how to back a trailer - and you know what, she got that trailer in the end....and it was passed around the family until just a few years ago.
- Within the last year, I’d find her vacuuming in her office chair when she was told to be careful walking, she’d also dust mop and water the plants from Queenie (her power chair)

Mischievous: (ask any of her caregivers, they can attest to this)

- Her mischievous endeavors were mostly in her quest to maintain independence after ALS was making it necessary for her to rely on others for assistance
- She even snuck out one night past curfew to accompany Marilyn to the airport to pick me up. She’d usually go to bed around 6:30 or 7PM because she was tired. My flight arrived around 10:30 PM and Marilyn pulled up in mom’s car to pick me up. The back window rolled down as I came outside and mom and Scooter were smiling at me from the back seat!

Joyful:

- No matter what life threw at her, she maintained a positive attitude and didn’t reort to negativity and bitterness. This was especially true after her ALS diagnosis. I’ve witnessed others become angry and bitter after a terminal diagnosis and that didn’t happen with her.
- Even days before her death, she was moving her arms to the beat and gesturing along in her bed to one of her favorite songs while in bed.

- Created such a fun, loving and welcoming home that even the neighbor's children wanted to move in with us at times and rejoiced in being called some of her favorite nicknames

Loving:

- She put so much love and dedication into raising her 3 kids that we didn't think twice about helping her in her time of need
- She treated others with grace, even when it wasn't warranted
- Bonded with others even after she lost the ability to speak, all 4 of her caregivers were never able to carry a full speaking conversation with her, but yet she bonded with all of them. Never underestimate the things you can communicate via writing, gestures and eye contact.
- Mom was a loyal friend, always helping others - mending clothes, driving people to the doctor, volunteering to serve on the board at her townhouse association
- She would always cook for us when we came to visit, she even made a gumbo for me in October when I came to town.

Creative:

- Loved to re-arrange furniture, even doing that at other people's homes when they were at work (Ed); she called it "playing house" and it was her favorite thing to do. We would frequently come home to a reimagined house and it was kind of delightful and fun
- She made gifts for everyone. So many of our homes are filled with her artwork, treasures, sewn items, painted wine glasses.

Some important lessons I learned from watching her:

- Be an agent for yourself. If you aren't getting answers (especially about a health concern), keep asking questions.
- If people tell you how awesome you are, believe them! I hope she was able to glimpse just a bit how truly awesome we all thought she was. She was so humble that I am not sure she really, truly could absorb what a fantastic person we all saw her in our own eyes.
- I would often tell her that even though that ALS is such a devastating disease, there was one gift in the midst of all of the sadness - she always poured so much love into everyone else, but with those caring for her during her ALS journey, hopefully she could see how much she was loved by everyone around her.

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard" - Winnie the Pooh