

This has been a week of unreality. For several days after Mom died, I had the recurring thought arise in me that this is all a mistake, that I was informing people of her passing but really, it was a dream and soon I would wake up and she would still be with us. Of course, I'd give my head a shake and realize that I now had to face life without her. Likely, many people in this room had a similar experience this week. Mother was just so perennial, almost always there when I phoned, always up in the mornings, always up for a party, always rebounding. Except now..... and that has made for a difficult week.

There is a John Lennon song, Beautiful Boy, where he says, "Life is what happens while we're making other plans." We had plans. Mom was moving to Kamloops and all of us were engaged in making the move happen as effortlessly as possible.

Jane was coming for a week, and after than Jay was going to stay for a month to do the move. She wanted him to come, just to hang-out with her, like the old days. Jeff was taking time out from his busy life to put the finishing touches to her new place. Two more great-grandchildren were expected, one any time now and another in June, a Hambleton family reunion, the first in 25 years, is scheduled for May. She wanted to visit her sister on Salt Spring and then of course, go to the cabin in the summer. We had plans..... and then life happened.

We weren't finished Mom, but I guess you were and here we are today, mourning the reality that we do not have you in our future.

We can be sad about her death but not about her life. She grew up in a happy family with 11 siblings and I understand took merciless teasing from her seven brothers. She had a loving marriage to our father for 48 years – through their travels they saw the world and met interesting people. She was first and foremost a wife, mother and grandmother. She had a close relationship with her four children and her grandchildren and lived to meet her four great-granddaughters who affectionately called her GIGI – at least the ones who had learned to talk. She had excellent health until just a few years ago when she was diagnosed with cancer. Her cancer treatment, surgery, chemotherapy, she handled with courage and dignity and without ever complaining.

Many words have been used to describe Lorna this week, her neighbors called her an elegant and gracious lady, Bob Glen called her a paragon of calm, Jay's friend Al called her a classy lady and said she was different from all his other friends Mom's, several people spoke of her balanced personality, many others of her sense of humor. Someone said she was easy company, and she was. Playing cards, watching a movie, sitting at the cabin looking at the lake, she was happy with her own company but always welcomed others.

I remember one Christmas Day at our house everyone had gone out on a sunny, crisp, snowy day to cross country ski and Mom and I stayed behind to do the dinner. I spent a moment or two wishing I was out in the fresh air with them but as Mom and I worked quietly together in the kitchen, as we had done so often in the past, I felt so appreciative

of her gentle presence, her willingness to always help me. We had the loveliest afternoon together and I remember savoring the time knowing it would not last forever.

One can't think of Lorna without the word patient coming to mind. She could wait happily, she didn't rush, she was always ready, and on time and she was always organized. Wherever she was, she created order around her. My Aunt Jean used to say that Mother could make a meal and it looked as though she had never been in the kitchen. I often said I had the tidiest mother on the planet and the thing is, we hardly noticed her doing it. She did almost invisibly. When she was newly married, she created a shopping list and committed it to memory. Having her say her shopping list out loud was an ordinary part of our growing up but later we'd get her to repeat it just for fun. We still find it hilarious.

Her cleanliness, neatness and organization may sound charming, but it had its downside. When a newcomer came to the cabin, we'd have to warn them, "If you want to get invited back, make sure you use the right cloth. There was a cloth for the wood stove which was different from the cloth for the electric stove, a cloth for the floor, a cloth for dishes, one towel for hands, one for dishes and you got them mixed up at your peril. Above all, never put the tea towel over your shoulder.

Moxy was another word. She spent 18 years as a widow. She took a trip to Africa, and another across Canada. Every summer, she drove the four-hour trip to the cabin with a yowling cat in the car, she stayed two months and took great pleasure in getting to know the duck families that she fed, she hosted many card games and campfires at her cabin, often the last to go to bed, but always first up in the morning to light the stove and put on the coffee.

In her early eighties she drove with Jay to Inuvik, in the Northwest Territories, in April no less, stayed in his camper for the four day trip. In the freezing temperatures, she rode a skidoo on an ice road down the Mackenzie River to Hector and Tish's cabin. In the last few years, when I'd go with her to doctor's appointments, they'd asked her if she ever smoked, "Yes," she'd say. "I smoked until I was seventy-seven and I loved every minute of it. I'd still smoke today if it was good for me." In the mid seventies, she quit smoking cigarettes only to take up smoking a pipe which she did for about five years.

Lorna could handle an off-color joke and told the odd one herself but never uttered a racist comment. She could hold her own in any company, be charming and engaging and for the most part accepted people as they were. That said, she had a well-honed ability to sniff a phony out of a crowd. She didn't do it often, but when she did, I always took note because I came to learn she was usually right.

All the people who phoned with their condolences and kind words were too polite to mention the word stubborn when speaking of Mom, but she could dig her heels in like no one I've ever known. Right or wrong, it was her way of maintaining control over her own life and preserving her independence. She came to understand this about herself and in her later years she'd say to me "I'm just being stubborn, aren't I?"

I still find myself thinking of the things I am going to tell her next time I talk to her. Trivial things, the chit-chat, the conversations we had on the phone every couple of days. She was always interested in the littlest goings on in our lives. There was nothing important. Fortunately, the important things had all been said.