

REFLECTIONS BY DAUGHTER FRAN FORMAN AT ROZ'S FUNERAL

November 27, 1988

Dear Mom,

I'm writing this letter to you with thoughts that I should have expressed a long time ago. But how could I write about you in the past, or even dare to remember our so many special moments together, when you were, until recently, so alive, so full of life in every way, so much a presence in my life? The thought of losing you never occurred to me. And the reality of this loss I'm afraid is not yet beginning to be felt.

Until the end of your struggle with the tumors' onslaught throughout your body, you held onto your strength, your dignity, your charm, and your love for all of us who love you so much. You never wavered in your commitment to us; you never denied the harsh and cruel truth of your disease; you never turned any of us away; and you never abandoned your beautiful smile or your twinkling eyes. And your strength gave us the strength to hold together as a family, and the longing to be with you and hold your hand, and the hope to accept the agony and the hopelessness with as much grace as you did.

But I know you would NOT want us to dwell on the torture of these last months. That wasn't your style. Yours was to live, to take each day and create a jewel, to enjoy and to give, to learn and to teach, and to share your riches and your smiles with all those you touched.

Late the other night, I jotted down some thoughts, some memories. The words seemed hollow and lifeless - without your booming voice, your enthusiastic style, your bright colors, sweet scent, and your smiling face which remarkably became more beautiful with age.

I remember when you sat at a little table with me - I must have been about 5 - and we did construction paper cut-outs. I remember your sewing clothes for my dolls - and surprising me with them for Chanukah (I thought they were for Clare). I remember all the after-school schlepping you did - the dentist, the orthodontist, the shoe store, Brownies, art class, to friends. I remember when you yelled at me for things I deserved and sometimes didn't. I remember those years you spent as leader of the Brownies and the Girl Scouts, even after I dropped out. You were always so active in numerous community services; the children's zoo, PTA, Baltimore Jewish Council, Sinai Hospital, and you still found time to play golf, to give great parties - often

big imaginative affairs, to garden, to create magnificent flowers flower arrangements, and to run our household.

When I left for college, you entered a new phase and established your career as a mental health counselor and family therapist. You were so proud of your work! Later, you and Dad enjoyed your retirement together, here in Baltimore and in Florida. You became an aggressive player of bridge and other games. You remained a spirited golfer and still found time to travel, to exercise, to read, sew, entertain and shop. And I always marvelled at the number of phone calls you would get, the friends you had - I was - still am - so fond of your friends. Mom you were always so busy! What a reservoir of energy - boundless energy you had. Everything you did, you did with such vitality!

Mom, I did some pretty outrageous things in the heat of my adolescence. I can't pretend you weren't upset - maybe pretty hysterical at times. Somehow, though, we got through it all. You were always there for me, waiting with open arms, and when I finally settled into a lifestyle that more or less approximated your's, and that I sought for myself - then we became friends again. And finally, the great joy of your life - your grandchildren - came one by one. You were the world's greatest grandma - down on the floor with the kids, swimming with them, taking them to playgrounds, shopping, even toilet training Sophie. Only occasionally would your patience wear thin. But never your energy. You told me recently that your greatest regret in dying so young is not seeing your grandchildren grow up. You had planned a cruise with them - that would have been fun. I've told you many times these past weeks how much of you is in your grandchildren - your eyes, your nose, your playfulness, your memories. I wish there had been time for more, but I'm grateful for even these.

I love you. You'll be with me always. Maybe someday I'll see you again.

Love, Frannie