



# Sigma Summaries

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## A Modest Tribute to a Modest Lady

I have made reference to my mother occasionally in these newsletters, and as many of you know, for the last few years she (or we, her family) suffered from Alzheimer's disease. Last week, my mother lost her struggle and at the age of 81 met her eternal reward. My father, her mate of 54 years, mourns her loss but knows that in reality, she left him a few years ago. With your forbearance, I would like to tell you a bit about my mom. Her story is one that is extraordinary in its ordinariness.

My mother was one of those unsung heroes that we all know about. She and my dad were married in 1951 and settled in Garden City, Michigan. Five children (I am the youngest at 44) resulted from their partnership which then begat 14 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren. I hosted my family for lunch during the funeral services and what a sight it was to see an entire banquet room filled from end to end with all of the family members!

My father was a fabricator for American Motors (now part of Daimler Chrysler) for some 30 odd years. As anyone who ever lived in the car capital of the world during the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's knows, instability was a way of life.

Fortunately, I don't recall my father ever losing his job, but a modest income and 7 family members meant that resources were always a bit tight. But, we never went hungry, we never were without a winter coat, and the house was always warm. My mom was good at stretching mealtime budgets long before hamburger helper was ever invented.

As improving prosperity came to our household, we got a swimming pool and my mom spent more time in that pool than we kids ever did. The neighbor lady behind us also had a pool, and my mother and the neighbor would float in their pool chairs for hours in the summer afternoons, drinking their coffee and smoking their cigarettes and kibitzing back and forth.

When there were funerals for folks in the neighborhood, it was my mom that was organizing the housewives (that is what they were – every household only had one car and it was only the dads that went to work in our community) to prepare food, take care of kids, and generally be there for support. She did not seek out credit – she just got it done.

My mother and dad loved to entertain and have company. Every summer they hosted a pig roast, and

our yard would be filled with the sounds of country music blaring from the amplifier, the smell of a roasting pig and corn, and nonstop chatter and banter. New Years Eve parties were also their specialty and we kids would wake up on New Years day to four or five couples sitting around the kitchen table reminiscing about the party fun.

My oldest brother was the hell-raiser in the family, and my mom was up to the task. She would drive the old Rambler station wagon (our first, second car!) over to the Tastee-Freeze by the high school to make sure her oldest son was not skipping classes. When she found him there, this 5'2" feisty dynamo had no problem marching in and getting in his face and threatening to ground him from his Javelin if he did not get back to class. His buddies all knew and loved her so the embarrassment was short-lived. She was also the one to examine his report card – and any deficiency there also meant that he would lose access to his beloved sports car.

I remember at my parents' 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration that my mother made a remark to one of our family members, within my earshot, that she would never live to see her 50<sup>th</sup>. I wondered at the time

how long we would have her with us because she did have some significant health problems in her 40's and 50's. I just hoped that she would live long enough to know my children, and know them when they got to the stage in their lives where they would remember her. That prayer was granted and my children were all actually able to visit with her just a few weeks before she died.

My mother was fiercely loyal to my dad and to us kids. Even in the depths of her Alzheimer's fog, she would plead with my dad that she wanted to see her kids. She asked

my sister just a few months ago, after she was moved in to the nursing home, to make sure that my dad was eating and that the house was clean.

The last time I visited her before she died, she was really struggling. Apparently over-medicated, or perhaps appropriately so, she could barely form words. But when my daughter Mandy asked her if she knew who I was as we were getting ready to leave, she blurted out, "That's my baby!" Another blessing.

There was nothing spectacular about her death. After a near fourteen hour

vigil at her bedside, and after my father kissed her and told her he loved her for the last time, she drew her last breath and left us on September 4, 2005

I have no regrets. I told my mom often that I loved her. I was relieved that she was released from the torment of Alzheimers. I have faith that I will see her again.

Thanks for letting me share this tribute to my mom.

Robert M. Bilkie, Jr., CFA

Your financial situation and investment objectives should be reviewed periodically to ensure applicability to your current situation. Please remember to contact Sigma Investment Counselors if there are any changes.

