

My grandmother was a teacher by profession, but the lessons she taught extended outside the classroom. My grandmother was my hero. It was through volunteering in her 1st grade classroom that I developed a love of teaching. It steered me to my career as a kindergarten/first grade teacher today.

When I was younger I remember everywhere I went with grandma it was “Oh Mrs. Ramsey!!! Do you remember me?!” Of course she did and she would chat with them about their life and ask about their family. She was like a celebrity. She was able to touch so many people’s lives.

She treated everyone with dignity and respect no matter their age or ability level. She cared about everyone she crossed paths with be it the dry cleaner, a student, a church member, or someone in her own family. Grandma truly **cared** about people and was a champion for those who needed extra help in life. Growing up with her, my hope was that I too could make such an impact.

As I have grown up, I have realized what a weight caring so many can be. The extra stress and time it takes and how this extra effort and love can go seemingly unappreciated. However, my Grandma made all that caring and support seem so effortless. She rarely complained and always kept a positive demeanor. I don't know how she managed it all. I struggle to extend myself the way that she did on a daily basis. Sometimes I want to wall myself off and just pay attention to my own needs. But then I will miss out on the joy of getting to know and care for others. I, like many others in this room, know this joy because of my grandma.

The time I spent with her growing up help shape me into the person I am today. I had the pleasure of getting to spend the last week of her life with her. I did not know that was the case at the time, but I feel so blessed to have had that extra time with her. I am amazed at the lessons and gifts she was able to bestow on those around her, even at the end of her life. It is truly a testimony to her character. It serves to inspire me to work even harder to be the person who is there for other people.

I didn't understand it all as it was happening, but upon reflection I see the amazing tapestry of lessons she weaved to create a beautiful Christmas together.

She showed me it is ok to ask for help when you need it. She always stayed at least one step ahead of her illness, making sure plans were in place so she could remain as active as possible. After 32 years of witnessing and receiving her compassion and love, I was able to reflect that back to her and help her. The woman that showed me what a joy it is to help people allowed me to feel that joy as I helped her. It isn't often that you are able to offer something to your hero. My grandma gave me this gift.

She made sure Robert, Catherine, and I were organized and had a plan to host Christmas in her house. Robert had been following grandma's lists to prepare for Christmas even before our arrival. Grandma had the foresight to make sure everything was in place so we could be successful. Where other people would have been overcome with helplessness, my grandmother had the fortitude to continue on in the same manner she had always lived her life. Her tenacity was inspiring. She continued to do her hair, makeup, and put together outfits to her last day. She wanted to look good and have a good time with those around her.

Even as her health declined, she insisted on having Bill, Jan, Cindy, Brian, Jenn, Chris, Catherine and myself together for a Christmas

dinner. She taught a lesson in gratitude when she said it was important to her that she could repay the kindness to Bill's family for all the times they have hosted her. Though she could not come downstairs to join us for dinner, she knew that having us all come together would create a special memory that we would cherish. Grandma knew this was her final party and she wanted to be surrounded by people who knew and loved her and that she knew and loved.

As my grandmother, Robert, and I posed for a picture in our silly Christmas getup, she made me promise that when I look back on this Christmas I will remember this moment and all the fun we had creating this day. That I would forget how sick she was and not let that be mark on the memory.

Grandma of course we will remember the joy and love we shared on Christmas. Your compassion and consideration for your family was reflected in everything you did, down to your last breath. You even made sure to wait until all your boys could be home. You always loved your family coming together and being the destination. I will remember you always as the courageous, empathic, and nurturing woman I love and respect. Thank you for bestowing these gifts and lesson to me and to all those you have impacted in your life.

By Rachel Ramsey, granddaughter