

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:9-13

I will miss my mom forever. She was my biggest cheerleader, best counselor, toughest critic, and brought me more confidence, happiness, and stability than anyone else in my life.

From the time I can remember she never hinted that there was anything I couldn't do. Not only was she that person for me but for all my friends and family. I know that Janel and our kids, Jessica and Justin and Ashley and Brice would echo the same thing.

As an encourager, I think mom demonstrated that most by her gift of hospitality. There is no doubt that her gift from God was encouragement and hospitality.

I remember when we would have revivals at our church we always hosted the speaker who was in town. They would stay at our house. Many of you remember the Good Twins, one of them would stay with us, and when he got married he and his wife stayed with us, and when they had a baby, again they

all stayed with us. I never recall mom complaining about that or suggesting they stay anywhere else.

From the time I can remember we had parties at our home. From casual coffees and wiener roasts to Christmas open houses and dinners she had the ability to put together a meal and atmosphere that radiated love, acceptance, and fun.

I remember every Christmas she would make dozens of cookies and candies and decorate our house for Christmas. The dining room in the center of our home had a huge table filled with red candles in crystal candle holders. Surrounding the candles were plates filled with these cookies and candies. She would leave these plates on the table the whole Christmas season because we had parties almost every night the last 2 weeks before Christmas. We would have the neighbors, our friends, our family, church friends, and she frequently hosted the PEO Christmas party. Of course, we always had her green punch made from lime sherbet and 7 up.

I know many of you attended one of those Christmas parties at our home, so you can appreciate this memory.

As we got older, her love for hospitality continued. I know many of you remember Maria from Ecuador. She

came to live with us for a school year. My mom loved her like a daughter.

I know many of you remember the parties we had in high school and college. All we had to do was say we wanted to have some friends over and she would start cooking. She never cared how many come or how much we ate. It didn't matter how late we stayed up or who came, we were all welcome anytime.

Perhaps the best memories I have of mom's hospitality were the summers I spent there with my kids and Janel and her kids. We would all pile into that house, Kirk and Janel and Bill and I would go every summer with our kids from the time they were born. She would have the rooms ready for all of us. Typically, the girls (Jessica and Ashley) would have a room and the boys (Justin and Brice) would have a room. She always had some special treat for them, when they were young, it was a new glass with their name on it or a game to play in the yard, as they got older, it was a lottery ticket, or money to go to the taste freeze , but she always had tickets for Summerfest and money to play the games at summerfest. Then typically, at the end of the summer they would get some money for school clothes. She was the best when it came to grandmas and you know

that because even though none of them grew up in La Harpe they all have friends who know grandma and feel her loss because they had been to La Harpe for a visit and they also experienced her hospitality.

Mom loved food, flowers, and fun. When she got the gazebo in her yard she frequently combined the three in this gathering place. We have so many wonderful memories of coffee, tea, and conversation in that special place. I know many of you share those memories. Especially her neighbors Bob, Lynne, and Dianne.

Up until mom's last days she continued with her love of others and her knack for hospitality. The day before mom died, her friend in Phoenix whom she had come to love came to visit her. Her daughter brought her and before they got there, she wanted to be sure there was enough chairs in her room for both Maybelle and her daughter to sit. We were bringing in a chair to be sure they were comfortable.

Many of us will miss mom, she will leave a void in our daily lives. Following her move to Phoenix, every Sunday mom would call Aunt Wilma, she would bring her up to date on what was going on in all of our lives and she would catch up on Hancock County news.

Many of you know the special friendship mom had

with her sister, Aunt Javon. I don't know of 2 other sisters who had the bond that mom and Aunt Javon had. They truly adored one another. They laughed more together than any sisters I know. For several years, Mom, Aunt Javon, and Janel and I would take a shopping trip together. We had so much fun eating, laughing, exploring new places and just being together. I will forever remember those times.

Aunt Javon and Uncle Ron's boys were like my brothers. We spent so much time with them. My mom and Dad loved them like sons. She would cook their favorite foods, take us all to the farm for a tromp around the farm, out to pick berries but one thing for sure, she always made sure they had a good time when they came, and the number of just plain good times we had with them is beyond measure.

I will never forget being at Aunt Javon's and Scott had pizza party for his basketball team at his coach's house. Aunt Javon was making some pizza for them. As she took a pan out of the oven, it fell face first on the floor. Aunt Javon gasped in despair and mom immediately started scraping the pizza topping off the floor and putting it back on the crust, saying put it back in the oven and brown it, they will never know, they do this in restaurants all the time!!!

Perhaps the people who will miss mom the most are Janel and I and our families. She was a strong, vibrant part of lives until the day she died. She taught us all so much about love, laughter, commitment, and faith. Most of these lessons were by example.

We all talked to her or saw her at least once a week. Mom made such an impact on our children's lives they wanted to see her or talk to her. Jessica's daughter, Amelia, who is 2 would come into Janel's house running to Gigi's side. She brought a tremendous amount of joy to mom the last 2 years of her life.

Ashley came with her youngest, Hasten, a few weeks before mom died, and they spent time just being together, but one afternoon, Ashley painted moms fingernails and she bragged about that for days. Face timing with grandkids and great grandkids was something she loved to do.

Justin and Brice were her boys she never had. Talking to them and hearing about their jobs, lives, and travels lit up her life. She was always telling me something she had talked with them about. She loved having them visit her. Not many boys liked to visit their grandmother after they were teens, but Justin and

Brice always wanted to be around mom and loved bringing their friends to meet her and see LaHarpe.

As many of you know, mom lived with My sister, Janel, for the last 6 months. Janel put her life on hold and cared for her in her home. Even though I tried to be there as much as I could Janel carried the burden for the day to day. I was able to be there quite a bit in the last month and Janel, Mom, and I had some good times. It was a peaceful and caring environment and I will forever be grateful for that time and Janel's hospitality and commitment.

Bill was able to be there for the last days of mom's life too. His support to Janel, mom and I was a blessing.

My mom was a special person to so many. When we moved them out of their home in La Harpe I found some notes she had saved from what must have been secretary's day at the high school. I want to end with some as I think they capture who mom was to so many of us.

"Cerece is one of those rare people that you can call your second mom"

"Cerece is always cheerful and happy no matter how down or depressing my day seems to be I always feel 10 shades lighter and 5 lb thinner after seeing her

lovely smile and hearing her happy chuckle-and she never says anything bad about anybody. She really cares about others.”

“No matter how bad a day I’m having Cerece has a way of making things seem better”

“This seems rather shallow as meaningful qualities go, but it always lifts my spirits to see what Cerece is wearing-she always looks so nice and her colors match perfectly and it’s a pleasure to see her each day, like a nice surprise. So when you go shopping Cerece, remember you’re doing it for all of us”

“She is the greatest because she let’s us blow off steam and makes us feel better when she agrees or offers sympathy. She also gives great advice on child rearing and has an uncanny talent for putting things in their proper perspective. I really admire her for this.”

“I appreciate the fact that I can tell Cerece things or make comments when I’m frustrated, and I know they will go no farther. Often I just need some to listen to me. This is Cerece’s specialty.”

I also found a letter mom sent to me shortly after I graduated from college. I would like to end with something she wrote:

“Just don’t get yourself in an uproar. You’re a big girl now so act accordingly. Don’t’ get down on yourself about things that aren’t that big of a deal-do what you feel is the best and you don’t have to be on the defense about it. Hang in there as we have all come thru several crisis and we won’t be given anymore to bear than we’re given strength to withstand”

Love you, Mom