



## *Oh, Dolores*

*Her name was Dolores. Which in Spanish means "sorrow or pain." What a way to start your life. Yet when people called out her name it was often preceded by, "oh." As in, "Oh, Dolores." And it was usually after she had spoken to them first. Think about it - how many times did you say, "oh mom, oh mom-mom, oh Aunt Dolores, oh Dolores. You did do it, didn't you? It's okay. I did it too.*

*She was born into a family of musicians, in South Philly, PA. So, it is no wonder that she fell in love and married the musician next door, also known as Anthony, Mr. Ant, Tony, Dad, and Pop-Pop. They married on Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1951 and later had three daughters all named Anthony prior to their births. And we are grateful we were not named Antonia, Antoinette, or Toni with an "i." By the time I was born in 1956 we were living in Swarthmore, PA.*

*We had two dogs. He was named Scottie because he was a Scottish Terrier and none of us could agree on a name, so we kept calling him scottie dog and it stuck. I bugged my mother relentlessly to get a dog. She told me I would even follow her into the bathroom. One summer night dad came to me and asked if I wanted to go to the pet store and look. (he had done this before, so I had no expectations) He said, ask mom if she wants to come too. I liked the Scottie and the Carin terrier. Mom said the Carin is 250 and the Scottie is 200.00. I didn't argue. I got a dog. And I lovingly took care of him. But she fed him. And so, he loved her more. They got into arguments. He liked to bark. And if she yelled at him, he would bark more. And he was always jumping on the couch and laying on her pillows. Boy she didn't like that either. My favorite story is one I came upon when I returned from school. She was in her bedroom, ironing (she was always ironing) and having a conversation with someone - I didn't know who.*

*Mom was usually in the kitchen making dinner around 5:00 which is when she fed him. But you know how we have daylight savings and standard time every year? Well apparently, we had switched back to standard time without informing our dog so when she wasn't in the kitchen at 5:00 his time, he would burst into her bedroom and tell her she was late for his dinner. The conversation I overheard was her calming explaining to him that it was only 4:00 PM because of standard time and he needed to come back in an hour.*

*Niki was our second dog. I got him for mom and Barb after I moved to LA. Niki was a Westie. She yelled at Niki a lot and he never listened to her. Barb would repeat what mom said in a calm voice and he would immediately comply. However, like Scottie, she fed him. He liked to lay on dad's lap when he sat in the lounge chair. Mom would say, "Ant dinner" and Niki would jump off dad's lap and run into the kitchen. When dad didn't immediately follow, he would run back into the living room to tell him dinner was ready in case he didn't hear mom calling him.*

There was an underlining rule at our house. Do not talk to mom until she has had a cup of coffee. It was a rule one dared not break. So I should not have been surprised when I called her on June 12, 2020 at 5:45 pm EST and when she answered the phone said, "I am going downstairs I will call you back after I have had a cup of coffee". Furthermore, on Tuesday morning July 14<sup>th</sup> the day after she had the aortic dissection that would ultimately take her life, she asked the nurse for a cup of coffee.

Hey, have you ever had a conversation with Dolores that didn't involve food? Maybe it's the Italian in her, I don't know but I can tell you that this gene was not passed on to me. Mom how was your doctor's visit. "Oh fine, we stopped at Panera's on the way home, I had the soup and a half sandwich. She went with my father on a business trip to Mexico. (hard to believe, but she really did) Mom, how was your flight? "They served us a great meal on the plane." So, mom, did you see the ancient ruins while in Mexico. "Yes, they were beautiful. We were sitting at a restaurant drinking Mai Tais and we could see them in the distance." When it came to food she liked to be prepared, so unexpected company really tapped into her anxiety. What was amazing was how she would sneak dad out to get cold cuts and pastries and have a full buffet on the table in less than 30 minutes. We have enough food in the basement for COVID-19 to last another 12 months without having to leave the house. Seriously though she was a great cook. We will all miss her deviled eggs, her coffee cake and her famous iced tea. And the meatballs would simmer in gravy - not sauce! The first time she came to visit me in LA I heard her scream from the kitchen. I ran back to her - I thought maybe she was startled by a mouse or a spider. No, it was a jar of Prego. She threw it out. She may have put on gloves first. I used to complain about her cooking until I went to Germany for a week. When I returned, I said I would never complain about her food again. It was never a slight to her cooking skills. I just didn't like anything north of meat and potatoes. Once she noticed that I was very content to eat only bread and drink water. She told me that might bode well for me in my future. Mom could be so loving and sarcastic at the same time. It was one of her gifts.

Did you ever get whiplash following Dolores' train of thought as she started one subject, segued to four others before returning to her original thought? Do you remember how much you enjoyed her change of tenor and animation as she was talking - and how she started laughing at her own words before she even finished the story? She never had to tell a joke. She was naturally funny. The facial expressions alone were priceless. She was a great conversationalist because she kept up on local and world news, entertainment, fashion and especially weather. She possessed the wit and wisdom of Erma Bombeck, the knowhow of hints from Heloise, the compassion and caring of Dear Abby, and the cooking and decorating skills of Martha Stewart. We will miss hearing her voice most of all.

Dolores had always been worried about her figure. Obsessed is probably more accurate. I remember her doing exercises with Jack La Laine on tv when I was young. She bought every exercise tool from Suzanne Sommers thigh master to a treadmill. There was an exercise bike, jump rope, stretch bands and a mini trampoline. And they were all used consistently almost never. But you know she always looked good. She knew how to dress and make it work. Her style was both classic and sheik. A piece of jewelry here, maybe a scarf. Don't forget the shoes. She had shoes for every occasion. The hair was coiffed and the makeup flawless. She claimed to have played volleyball, basketball, and softball in high school. I was not aware of this. However, once when she was visiting me in Hermosa Beach, we passed a beach volleyball net and she informed me she was a good volleyball player in high school. I think I may have asked her what day that was.

Mom made sure we kept up on our schoolwork. She monitored religion, English, spelling, history and reading. Dad did the math and science and geography. Mom did not like math. She used to joke with her grandsons that advanced math was worthless because you were never going to use it in real life. I loved her for this for as you may know I am not a math person. But take her to a store and watch what happens. She could calculate the discount and add the tax faster than the cash register. And coupons - one should never leave the house without coupons. I once asked her for coupons for Bed, Bath, and Beyond. They dated back to 1997. And Kohl's cash - that would get her out of the house. Then there is the "extra care CVS card" She sent Janet on many trips for those discounts. She used to get this

entertainment book of coupons which had just about everything. "Bowling, miniature golf wait I have coupons. "Pizza - don't forget the coupon." Anyone need an oil change, going on a cruise, car rental - let me give you a coupon" I used to work as a salesperson at Strawbridge and Clothier - it was like Macys (for those of you under 40) She loved to shop there because of my 20% discount. She would waltz her way through the departments putting items on hold for her daughter to pick up later. And she bought great gifts. She invested a lot of time picking out the perfect gifts for you. She loved presents too. Giving and receiving. She would make a big deal out of any gift she received especially if it was from her husband, children and especially her grandchildren. She was a master class of gratitude and appreciation.

She was a great mom to her three daughters. Our home was filled with games, toys, books, love, and laughter. There was always music. It started with a radio, then a stereo and later cable tv music channels, then came the iPad and finally the amazon echo. She made her own playlist with songs from her brother Charlie, Frank Sinatra, Andrea Bocelli, and Louie Prima among others. She sometimes called Alexa, Etna or Hazel and got frustrated when she didn't answer. She also called apple's Siri, Suri. I set up Siri on her new iPad and told her she could ask her anything. So, mom said to Siri, "how old am I?" (my bad) Her second attempt was a math problem which Siri correctly solved. Mom encouraged our ventures into the arts. Her only flaw was that she wanted everyone - and I mean everyone to learn the piano. Janet obliged. I liked to sing and took up the guitar and drums. Barb made her own music and she is quite the visual artist. Her beautiful paintings hang on the living room wall. I painted on the wall once, but mom scrubbed it off and punished me. Oh well. The tv was the big source of entertainment at home. I sat closet to the tv, so I was the unofficial remote until someone invented it. Mom loved tv. From news to talk shows, soap operas to prime time - and let's not forget "the tonight show with johnny Carson." Or any of the other late-night shows. She was very excited to watch awards shows and critique what the stars were wearing. She was General Hospital's biggest fan and was mad that covid-19 forced the show into reruns. We all loved to watch tv with her. She and Janet liked the awards shows, and Barb enjoyed watching Carol Burnett and Lucy with her, but I got the best reward. She and I would watch "The Ed Sullivan Show every Sunday. It wasn't my favorite, but she enjoyed variety shows. It was because of this that I witnessed history. The first Beatles appearance in America. As well as the other 8 times they were guests on the show. Thanks, mom - that was a big one. Mom learned quickly how to use the DVR and often taped shows about news, medicine, and talent shows she thought might be of interest to us. Her focus was never self-centered - it was always about sharing.

Dolores was known to be late for every event. Even the ones that were on the same date every year. But what an entrance she made. Always impeccably dressed and the makeup was perfect. She lit up the room and was always the life of the party. Don't see her? Just follow the laughter. What great times we had with our aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents growing up.

Thanks to Barb and Pete the grandsons finally arrived. They were the light of her life. She had endearing nicknames for them - "this one and the other one, and the big one and the little one." But she was mom-mom - her favorite name. She showered them with food, and gifts, and toys and food. Did I mention food? They loved "Mike & Ikes" candy so she always had them on hand, and she hid them all over the house. She was so proud of them. Jacob, the oldest is very into music and she liked to say that he has the Inverso/Venturo genes. He sings, plays guitar, and writes his own music. He posts videos on you tube and tic-tok. When he posted his first video, he called me and said, "Val, I already have 38 views." I said, "hude, that's your grandmother." She played them over and over. And he gets bonus points because he looks just like his pop-pop. Ben is two years younger and is her favorite grandson according to him. They do have a special connection. Her name is "Alexa." They would sit in the breakfast room and take turns playing their favorite songs for one another. They would sing, sway and dance to the music. Ben learned the box step from her. They were relentless in their teasing of one another. For a while he called her, "old lady" because it always got a reaction from her. Once when he was around seven, he, mom and I were

having dinner and he leaned over to me and said, "could you tell the old lady to stop talking while I am eating." And off they were to see who would break out laughing first. - it was always her.

As you all know, mom endured much pain in her 90 years. It was physical and unyielding. It was as if pain sought her out. Five of us went to Las Vegas for a weekend and she got Shingles. There were knee replacements and a stroke. And so many other physical ailments too numerous to mention. She has suffered from depression since her thirties. That was the hardest. It doesn't go away. You just try to cope with it. Why am I telling you this? Because I want you to know how strong and brave, she was. Most people could not tolerate a quarter of what she went through. But she fought through the pain every day of her life. And no, she didn't make it to every event in your life, but she tried. And that made her sad. I can tell you that she was with you in spirit. She thought of you often and prayed for you. She always had her rosary beads with her. she never lost faith in God and accepted these hardships with grit and determination to keep smiling and look forward to each new day. She grieved the loss of many friends and relatives whom she loved so. She lost three of her sisters at a young age and her mother at 15. Of course, losing dad was the hardest. I guarantee you she made a beeline to him after she passed because she used to say "wait till I get a hold of your father... for breaking a promise, she made him say when they got married - which was that she would die before him. It was the only promise he didn't keep. They had such an incredible, loving marriage and he thought she was the most beautiful and funniest woman he had ever met. Dad was a lucky man, indeed. He always used to say, isn't your mother beautiful. He once said that while looking at a photograph. She was not the subject of the picture. She was off to the side in the background. But he only saw her. That's true love, people.

How ironic it is that what took her from us was her heart. We all knew her heart. It enveloped every one of us. It was the one organ that stayed strong while the rest of her body slowly and deliberately abandoned her. But it really isn't a sad ending after all. She was ready to move on. She felt relieved when the doctor told her her life's journey was ending. She was even granted a little extra time to say goodbye. She told us she loved us, was proud of us and that she had a good life. And the laughs kept coming. The day before she passed the hospice nurse and chaplain came for a visit. Janet, Barb, and I were there too. The chaplain commented, "It looks like a party in here" to which mom quipped, "yeah, a going away party."

Mom wanted us to tell all of you to "stay healthy and be happy"

written by Valerie M Inverso

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