Jaysen Bass

Professor Caswell

Public Speaking

05/01/23

Thank You Nellie

It feels like you were here just yesterday. Every day I would wake up and see you sitting in your living room chair with the news on, your cup of coffee on the chair side table with your favorite chocolate covered hostess donuts. It is funny, I had thought you found the secret to immortality. As far back as I remember, you would start the day with a cup of coffee, a cigarette, and one or two of those hostess donuts. It kept you healthy for dozens of years. So in a way, I guess I saw it coming once you weren’t smoking anymore. But who could let you smoke after what happened. You were entirely independent until you had that stroke, and I know it must have hurt oh so much to need our help. It showed, trust me. I don’t blame you for all the yelling and fussing because I know that was the only way you were able to express yourself, and I was just glad you were because honestly, I feel like keeping everything bottled up is what led to your stroke 4 years ago.

You were so strong and dealt with so much. I know having an alcoholic husband and kids who projected some of the harmful traits that were instilled in them must have been hard. Too hard. I just wish your generation was more open to therapy and openly talking about mental health, but we can’t go back, and sadly, you cannot come back. I stand here torn, not knowing if I should be sad those of us here lost you, or happy those up above got the gift of a lifetime. You are free from all the suffering now, yet it still does not feel real. I wish I could spend another day with you, though, in a way, you never left. I see you when I look into the mirror, when I talk to my brother, and now more than ever, when I talk to my mom, your daughter. I see you whenever things are getting tough, whenever I need a push to keep going because lord knows you pushed through so much. You stayed strong for those around you, and we tried to stay strong for you. I wish we could have done more for you, but we did what we could, and honoring your wish of never being sent to a nursing home was the least of it. Its not like we had a ton of extra space to accommodate you, but my mom was not going to let you continue to suffer when you had accommodated so much in your life. You put up with more than any singular person should have to. Growing up wasn’t easy for me either, and while there’s things I want to forget, I will NEVER forget those weekend vacations to your house in Brooklyn. I know you didn’t have a mansion or anything, but that escape meant the world to me. I could forget about anything that was going on at home and in my own life, and just relax, build some legos, and play on the sega you kept from the generations of kids and grandkids before me. I know you loved those hostess donuts so much, but let us be real, us kids could not survive on your diet. That’s why I’m so thankful you would cook grilled cheese for us, or at the very least order pizza, even though you neverrrr really touched the kitchen.

I mean come on, grilled cheese and pizza??? What more could a kid ask for? You made the best grilled cheese, two slices of that kraft cheese sandwiched in between two slices of white bread, toasted with some butter on the stove, though I know you made sure yours only had one slice. You never failed to remind me of that when I would make them for you. So simple, but so amazing. kind of like you. I cannot forget about the holiday lasagna and meatballs either. Even though it took some help, you made them as long as you physically could. I am sure you knew how important it was for family gatherings, though not nearly as important as you. The glue that held our family together. and now that it is dissolved, I can look back and see that impact. I wish I was more mature when I was younger so I could appreciate it while you were here, and even though it is too late for that, you helped me be more appreciative of the things I still have. Perseverance and unconditional love are things you helped me grow to appreciate even more. For three years you lived with us before you passed. We saw your highs and lows, and towards the end they got really low. I wish I could have done more for you in that time, but sadly your body and mind could no longer allow it. It reminded me to slow down and appreciate life for what it is, because it may not always look that way. I think back to those times you would grab the handle above the door whenever the person driving was speeding, and speeding for you was 5 miles per hour below the speed limit, regardless of what it was. Sometimes life moves so fast that you cannot slow down, but even then at least hold on to something.

When things get tough for me, you are one of the things that I grab onto to try and slow things down, or at the very least to give me some stability through the turbulence. That last day seeing you here was and still is indescribable, but looking back, I am glad you got to live a full life. You made it to 83, living on hostess donuts and cigarettes. Every time I see that white bag with the purple banner that leads to those chocolate covered donuts and those bubbly red letters that read donettes above them, I think of you. I think of you when I think of resilience, and I can see it now in my mother, who took your ideals and multiplied them within herself. I just hope that I can do the same, and now, no matter where I am, I know you will always be there standing by me. Grandma Nellie, I love you, and thank you for everything you have done for me. Until we meet again.