

Jay's Jottings

By Jay Uhler

My parents called Friday to say that my grandmother had died during the afternoon. She was 85 Easter Sunday.

The first weekend in March I drove to Pennsylvania to see her for the last time. My Grandmother Confer had written to say that if I wanted to be with Grammy Englert before she died, I should come soon.

It meant a lot to me then, but it means even more now. We both knew we would not see each other again. She had cancer and knew she was about to die.

I was surprised to see her so thin but more surprised that she was sitting in a chair dressed. She had a beautician friend come in that morning to fix her hair. It looked white and pretty and the blue dress was fresh and attractive. She had gone all out for our last visit.

Shortly after I arrived we began to talk about her dying. She said, "I'm ready to die. I hope you are ready for me to die."

"I'm ready for you to die, Grammy, but I surely will miss you. I answered as the tears began to come 'into my eyes, She said she didn't want anyone to mourn 'for her after she died. I reassured her that my grief would not be for her dying, because I 'didn't want her to suffer anymore, but my grief was because we couldn't see each other again.

We had been friends for quite a while and had talked together before but that weekend we were the closest. We reminisced about times together: band concerts she had taken me to as a youngster, trips to Kentucky to visit my parents in recent years. She got out an album of pictures and newspaper clippings of events in our lives and in hers. We had fun looking into the past.

Just before it was time for me to leave for Boston she asked me to pray with her. I'm seldom asked these days so I was surprised, but also pleased because I knew how "important it was to her.

After our prayers her thoughts were more with me than with herself. She told me that I had always been a special person to her, She talked about some of the suffering that I had experienced in my life and expressed how she had felt hurt, too, for me. We talked a bit more; then we gently hugged and kissed each other goodbye for the last time.

As I drove away sobbing, I thought about how she had come close to tears once but had seemed more happy than sad during my visit even though we had talked about painful things. I don't believe she was avoiding her feelings. I believe that my visit meant as much to her as to me and that she was happy that. I had come to say goodbye and relieved that she was going to die.

The next week she went into the hospital and didn't return to her home.

As I look down on the clouds over Connecticut from my seat in the jet taking me to meet with my family, there is much joy mixed with my pain and tears for it's not like going to say goodbye to her in a casket. We already said goodbye to each other with all the caring which had developed through the years.