



Eulogy for a Beloved Mother  
Catherine Dale  
March 30, 2013

How do you measure a life? By the diversity of people who have called, have written, and who are here today to celebrate the life of Catherine Morton. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the care and support our sister, Elaine, gave our mother, especially this last year.

One of my 'oldest' friends emailed me and described our mother as "gracious at all times, considerate, kind, unassuming, and always welcoming. She had a quiet determination about her and was interested in everything you told her, with a witty sense of humour". The daughter of my mother's former neighbour across the street emailed me . . ."what a special lady she was".

And so, what made Catherine Morton so special. She had a strength of mind I have never seen in anyone else. She exemplified grace and dignity—I never saw my mother leave the house without being perfectly groomed. On one of her hospital appointments the week before she had her stroke, I picked her up and she had done her hair and looked so very beautiful in her turquoise coat, and her big blue eyes.

I learned from the palliative care nurse that it is not pain that affects the aged, but rather, a bone-crushing fatigue, and so, I learned how much effort it must have taken my mother to be so perfectly coiffed that day.

Courage. At 91, mother was afraid of her last operation, and yet she went ahead. But she didn't get many breaks in her life. After the operation on Monday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, she came up the walk with Elaine, came into the house and looked great. But then two days later, she had a massive stroke.

She has shown remarkable courage and strength of mind throughout her life—a lonely only child, she never wanted to live alone and yet she has lived also the last 46 years of her life.

She reinvented her life at 45 when Father left our family, she was heart-broken, and yet she picked herself up, and at that age, found a job and began to support two children. Although she had never worked since she came to Canada, as my brother mentioned, she went on to make many friends through her work, many of whom are here today, and to become head of international claims for OHIP.

A voracious reader and an avid gardener—these are more gifts our mother gave us that I will treasure always. For you know, one can never be lonely in a garden or with a good book. And if you have a love of reading, you have such a leg up in life. Maybe that is why we all went on to post-graduate degrees—and became a teacher, a civil servant and a pointy-headed professor. Her two grandchildren are also teachers, and so, we try to exemplify what she taught us—to be a lady, a gentle man, to rise above your misfortune, and to learn to laugh at yourself, because “humour is your best defense”.

But first and foremost, she was a mother who always put her children first, and her grandchildren. She looked after Danny, then Jamie and Jordan, and they all benefited from her playing, her teaching and her love.

Often, and I know how lonely she was, she would say, “don’t come in Ann, you are tired”. Mother always there for us—after all my operations, I would wake up to open my eyes to see my mother sitting there, no matter how many buses she had to take. Even my last two, in her late 80s, I went home to be looked after by mother. She never ever failed us, and I fear, we took many things for granted, that she would always be there, that she wouldn’t die, that we had lots of time.

For me, the greatest demonstration of her mothering, was two days after her stroke, I lay my head beside hers and asked her “whatever will we do?” She brought her one good arm over and gave me the biggest bear hug—in the midst of her own devastation.

I started my remarks by mentioning an email from our old ‘across the street neighbours’, near the end of her life, she was the only one left of the old neighbourhood. And then a new family moved in with two children, and she made friends with them. I was amazed at my mother’s openness to change, but then she learned about the computer at 82. A few months ago, my mother and the family had a tea party and wore fascinators.

I would like to read you the letters they wrote to our mother, which I think sums up the essence of this very special lady—Catherine Morton, Kay Dale, a beloved mother and friend you could always go to when in trouble or needing advice.

*Dear Kay,*

*I’ve really enjoyed the times we had together. Talking to you on your porch in the summer, having a tea party and when you would look after us. It means so much that you would always take the time to ask how we were doing and have a conversation with us. You are a funny, generous, kind and friendly lady and I’ve always you to be kind of like a grandmother to me. It was nice to always have someone across the street we could always talk to.*

*Love, Adrianna*

*Dear Kay,*

*I am going to miss the tea party and getting babysitting by you. I loved loved playing cards and playing with your cats. You are a good friend.*

*Love, Nicholas*

Some people when they are on Earth occupy only the space of a tree, but when they leave, they leave the space of a forest.

Don't forget to have a cup of tea in your garden to celebrate a life so very well lived.