

Dear Friends,

My mother was not a saver. She was constantly weeding her possessions so that her children wouldn't have to when death came to her. Though she had beautiful things she treasured – Coalport china, Waterford crystal, Kirk sterling – she left very little for us to deal with. She liked everything to be in order. One of our last conversations concerned a sixty-three cent discrepancy in her bank statement. When she died unexpectedly in March, the only complications left for my niece and me were due to the most untimely death of my sister, my mother's power of attorney, who predeceased her by a few weeks. My mother took leave of the world having taken care of everything she possibly could have, an easement to us who survived her.

What she accomplished with respect to her possessions and finances, she duplicated in her relationships. As she had left nothing undone, so she left nothing unsaid. One of my cousins reported that after the death of her father many years ago, my mother called her twice a week at exactly 7:56 a.m. to check after her welfare. My cousin was not the only recipient of my mother's constant attention. Increasingly apartment bound by arthritis, she used her time to express words of appreciation and praise to those she loved, and to offer 'observations' to those she thought could benefit from them. She felt a commitment to say what needed to be said to everyone who was in her life. She didn't need to tell me how much she loved me on her deathbed, because she had told me every time we were together in the fullness of her life.

So after spending time cleaning out her apartment in April, there was little left to carry away. Except for the Passover dishes that I promised I would take and use, everything else fit into a shoebox – my father's wallet (which hadn't been opened since his death on July 13, 1984), his good Timex, and letters and cards that my sister and I had sent to my mother over the span of six decades. My mother left this world in perfect order. Looking at Olympic divers entering the water from a thirty-meter board this past summer, and learning that excellence in diving is measured by 'no splash' on impact, I came to understand that my mom lived a gold medal Olympian life. She exited the world with the same elegance as those divers entered the pool.

The way my mother lived and died serves as a blessing and as a lesson for me at this season of introspection and *teshuvah*. Following her example, I will spend the days between Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur weeding my life and connecting with those to whom I neglected to offer praise or words of appreciation. In this way I hope to enter the New Year 'clean', complete, and without undue splash.

I wish you all a good and healthy 5777. May it be a year of blessing and of healing.  
Warmly,