

## A Eulogy

My dearest Grandma, Fortuna Scott Iverson, died yesterday, June 15 of complications from stomach surgery. She is survived by, her loving daughter, Espirit, and four sons; Jeffery, Tom, Joe, and Sol. Nine of her ten grandkid are here today. I'm Joy, Tom's daughter.

I asked to deliver this eulogy today because my Grandma, Fortuna, "Una" for short, was the most optimistic person I've ever met. Born in 1918, she spent her teenage years living in a rural town in Illinois during the depression. There, she used to tell, she and her sister would go down to the stockyards to tell the migrating blacks where the local work was.

"Uncle Buck used to give us hell", she would say, "but they never did us no harm, and it was the right thing to do." She always said that she felt guilty because she never went to bed hungry.

As the daughter of a Baptist Minister, she was instilled with a stern morality. The problem was, it wasn't entirely a Baptist morality. When told that sinners would go to hell, she replied to her father, "But God wouldn't hurt another like that." She believed everyone could be good, even when they were bad to her.

During the war, she worked as a schoolteacher in Georgia. It was clear it was rough for her during those years. I'm try not to think what the townsfolk did to her when they learned she used to help blacks. We pressed her on it, on what happened in Georgia, but she never said a bad word about the place. A stern expression would cross her lips, but then you could see a wave of warmth sweep over her, and she would say that the weather was really nice. She would never allow something bad that happened to her change who she was.

We don't like to talk about Frank, her first husband. Una never said anything negative about another, but you could always tell how she felt about someone by how infrequently she would compliment them. The only thing she ever said about Frank was the he sure smelled good.

Peter, who also recently passed, was the love of her life; I have no doubt. They got married in 1952, just to get Una out of Georgia. Pete says that they built a partnership on the road. Soon, though, life got rough when they got to New York City. Una couldn't get her teacher's certificate and Peter started drinking. Soon they were living in a crash pad with 17 other people. Una wouldn't let it get her down. When Pete was hung over, she would ask for spare change to buy him a beer. Once, when she told that story, someone said, "What would you do that, you were just enabling him." Una didn't get offended. She just calmly replied, "If I can do something to make Pete feel better, I'm gonna do it."

Finally, Grandma Iverson had had enough. Some money was acquired, let me put it like that. She and Pete opened a, what we would call, holistic medicine store. In 1953. Needless to say, the idea didn't catch on right away. Pete tells the story of confronting Una about the store and finances. "We're not selling anything. What are we doing here?" Una replied, "We're just on the cutting edge of this thing. 10, 15 years, we'll be doing great!"

She was right. Somehow the store survived, and, before long, Una and Pete were no longer sleeping on the floor in the back of the store. Pete once described their first apartment as, "An insect-infected dung-hole." Una was more subtle. "I never found a single flea in that place. Louse neither."

Just as life seemed to ease for Grandma, tragedy struck. My uncle Marvin was born stillborn. My father says that for a week after it happened, none of the kids could bare to look at her. But, after the prescribed bed rest, Una got up and carried about her business as if nothing had changed. Slowly, the kids came around, until everyone nearly forgot about Marvin at all. Years later, my father remembered and asked Grandma about it. "It wasn't Marvin's time yet," she replied. It turns out that every night she would pray so Marvin would have a place in a good family somewhere. She hoped someday to meet him. Marvin wasn't dead to her, he was just not supposed to be her child.

Life is, as it is. Pete got cancer, to which Una responded, "It's a really good way to lose weight." My cousin Billy got hit by a car and is confined to a wheelchair, which is why he can't be here today. Una never looked at him at all differently. She may have been at least a bit serious when she said she was jealous because Billy got to roll around everywhere. I could go on and on.

I love you Grandma. I hope you find your non-Baptist heaven to your liking.

We knew she was on her way out for a few months now. She did too. I don't know what the medical term is, but she had problems with digestion. One day, when her medication was working well, the doctor said she could have some ice cream. It took some persuading, but she finally convinced the doctor to have butter pecan.

She began by eating the ice cream around the pecans, but it quickly became apparent that she was either going to have to discard the pecans or eat them. Finally, she pulled one out of the ice cream, looked at me, and said, "You know I sure am glad that my remaining two teeth match." and began to chomp the pecan with those two teeth. She could find brightness in every circumstance. That is why I love my grandma. I'll miss you Una.