

## No Argument Here

(Happy Birthday, Mom. Paula Vazquez)

10-10-21  
(mom D.O.B. Oct 6<sup>th</sup>)

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For my mom's birthday, I hate to write another maudlin, somber-serious "tribute" post, but I admit I've struggled with what I want to say this time, which is crazy because, well, it should be really easy for me to say something great. I love Mom so much, and I enjoy so many laughing, smiling, tender-happy memories of her, yet somehow every time I try to write about her lately, about us, it just doesn't come out right. Honestly, my dad is easier for me to write about, but that's probably because our relationship was also a little bit simpler, and I'm beginning to think a bigger part of the problem is really just that Mom died first, then Dad a couple years later, and losing her was utterly devastating and almost incomprehensible. I don't think I've ever quite felt the depth of grief I experienced when my brother broke the news that Mom was gone. Yet, I've also never really grieved. To this day, it all still feels so tremendously unresolved, sort of unreal, even... it must affect me in ways I still don't quite grasp.

It should go without saying that Mom and I were very, very close, but while those who knew me best clearly recognized the strength of our bond, the people who didn't know us too well might be forgiven if they sometimes wondered whether we even liked each other, Mom and I. We did fight a lot, too often and pretty intensely, and I'd say it's not something I'm proud of... I'm supposed to say I'm not proud of it, but the truth just isn't so simple as that. In many ways, the idea that I'd feel "pride" in our frequent arguments ~~really~~ is as absurd as it seems, and to a great extent, particularly regarding my own behavior, I'm of course not remotely "proud" at all; no, I'm ashamed of so, so much that I said and how I acted toward my mom in the heat of anger. Here, though, is where my attempts to write about our relationship keep going off the rails, feeling too focussed on the negative even though our relationship was overwhelmingly positive, and forcing me to start over.

The important core of what I want to convey is, of course... I loved Mom very, very much, with all my heart and no reservations or secret doubts. She was, unquestionably, the one person in this world I could ABSOLUTELY count on, always and in every way, and the one who always, invariably, understood and supported me. Even when she didn't really "understand," still she did understand, on the deepest level, who I was and what I stood for. In the end, Mom trusted me implicitly, because she knew my heart in ways perhaps no one else ever has. I believe that's because, to a large extent, I shared her heart.

I want this point to be crystal clear: Mom was a <sup>person</sup> ~~person~~ of fundamentally good will. Oh sure, she could get angry, she could curse and stamp her feet and carry on, but ultimately, and even when she'd hiss and insist otherwise, she simply never wished genuine ill on anyone. I truly think there was no one, not even those she claimed

to hate, whom she wouldn't finally rally around and root for. Mom didn't really see much bad in people, never seemed particularly judgemental and was anything but self-righteous, generally just presuming benignity in others, which ~~seems like~~ a pretty decent bias to have, ~~considering~~ <sup>considering</sup> all the options. She never nurtured hatred, though she might come close if she perceived a threat to someone she loved — especially my dad. But really, even then she tended to forgive, and more importantly forget, given half a chance and a few cups of coffee between them. She held no grudges that I know of and her memory for wrongs was short... in fact, I believe it was intentionally short, which I never gave her enough credit for in life. I don't believe, though, that she was intentionally this way for me or for my siblings or anyone else, but the fact remains that she was setting an extraordinary example for all of us. Because of her example, Mom and I were alike in both our fiery tempers and our quickness to cool, so yes, we did fight and argue. We yelled at each other a lot, and I HATE ~~that~~ that — my memories of raised voices make me sick, yet in a strange way, also a little bit proud, too. Not proud for being a d-bag to my mom — not at all! — but proud, or thankful, that I do recognize some of what was best in her now in myself. She never allowed me to doubt that we could fight and yell, stupidly and almost viciously, but no matter how far we went, I went,\* it just didn't matter in the end. Our bond was unbreakable. I think it might've even been undamagable. We forgave each other our stupid overreactions, every single time, and I'm proud that she loved me such that she would fight with me, and allow me to fight with her, always without fear of affecting our mutually underlying, undying sense of total commitment and connectedness. Our occasionally rather fraught <sup>through</sup> relationship, Mom taught me what real loyalty looks like, and more importantly, what it FEELS like. If you've ever felt like you didn't deserve someone's love or forgiveness or support, but you got it anyway... if you've ever had someone truly TRUST you, trust in you, in every way, then you know what I mean. It's a rare kind of love, truly unconditional, which practically forces you to try to live and be worthy of the gift of another's genuine faith in your basic goodness; to try and match your attitudes and actions with the goodness that they clearly believe is ~~inside~~ <sup>inside</sup> you. Further, it makes you want to treat others with the same faith and loyalty, and so it inspires a truly virtuous cycle. That's what Mom gave me, and that's what I'm proud of and thankful for now. I miss her beyond words.

Mom, I love you, and despite how so much in my life may appear today, I hope you'd still be proud of the person whom you, through your daily example, always encouraged me to be. And... if I have any courage at all (still an open question in my own mind), I know that I owe much of it to you. Thanks for being a wonderful mother.

(\* I suppose I should make it clear, though ~~it's awful that anyone might think otherwise:~~ <sup>it's awful that anyone might think otherwise:</sup> our "fights" never got physical. (Mom didn't hit me, and it's literally unimaginable that I could've ever even thought of touching her in anger. Noise only.)