



# MOTHERS' DAY

During the last few years of her life Anne McDonough would often comment on how useless she had become. Typically she would say this in reference to some frustration, like fumbling with something she used to do easily- like doing up a button, tying a knot, playing Mozart on the piano, opening a can of tuna. Always the frustrations were about limitations in her daily living. As a child on her parents' farm she had seen a prairie fire burn around her while standing in water up to her shoulders. As a teenager she played piano in the local silent picture theatre. She received a graduate degree from university when women often didn't finish high school. As a woman she taught school, raised 5 children, and tried to make the world a better place. For many years she was a single parent. Anne's daughter, Mary Ellen, wrote this to her mother for Mothers' Day a few years before Anne's death. She read it at her mother's memorial service. I am lucky to be Mary Ellen's husband and to have known Anne. As Mothers' Day is near I hope there is something in this for all of us. Warmest regards, Russell.

## My Mother

My mother is like sunlight dancing  
on the lake  
- and like dark storm clouds coming  
over the hill.  
She has always lived her life under  
the protection of angels' wings.

My mother gives everything she  
has to everyone she loves - or  
likes,  
and she likes a lot of people,  
easily.

My mother cares little for material  
things.  
Money is of no interest to her,  
except for education, music,  
travel,  
and helping others.  
The word generous does not begin  
to describe my mother.  
My mother kneels on the ground  
and digs in the earth.

She takes the pit from a peach and  
carefully,  
gently, patiently grows a peach  
tree.  
She takes a long-stemmed rose  
from a bouquet given by a friend,  
and sticks it in the ground with a  
big old jar over it.  
Later we find a tiny rosebush.

My mother raised us by herself,  
heartbroken and betrayed.  
We tried her patience.  
We were not what are called "easy  
children."  
Except maybe one. Not me.  
Sometimes I want to just hold her  
and give her that warm, comforted  
feeling she gave me  
long ago - and not so long ago.  
But she is hard to hold, being long  
out of the habit of being held.  
She is a very independent woman.  
We agree and we disagree.  
We certainly can argue.

My mother is old now.  
At good times she takes joy in the  
sunset,  
the trees sparkling after a sleet  
storm,  
the funny, clever, adorable behaviour  
of the youngest grandchildren,  
the accomplishments of the older  
ones.  
She tidies up and sorts things  
that have come along with her  
through the years.  
My mother has always played the  
piano.  
She plays with abandon when she  
thinks no one can hear.  
At bad times all the battles of the

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world - far and near - vex her.  
She feels she is no longer of use.  
Being of use to others and enjoying God's creations  
are what life is about for my mother.  
And, despite her frustrations with her failing body  
and energies,  
it is not possible for my mother to not be of use.

How does one measure the use of  
the way her face lights up when she sees my chil-  
dren,  
the touch of her hand,  
her continuing efforts to "raise" us and improve  
upon her work,  
the home she keeps always ready and open for us,  
in spite of the loneliness of the empty rooms when  
we're not there,  
the voice on the phone,

the values she continues to instill,  
the constant, unceasing message that, as always,  
she will do or give anything she can to make us  
happy  
or relieve our pain  
- sometimes in spite of ourselves.  
These are beyond measure.  
The term "of use" doesn't begin to cover them.  
And these are my mother.

For Anne McDonough with love from Mary Ellen  
McDonough  
Mother's Day 1997

#### WOMEN'S SITES

**www.4women.org** The National Women's Health Information Center. The Office of Women's Health—US Department of Health and Human Services

**www.ivillage.com/travel/triptips**, gives tips on women's safety and health during business trips, as well as family-related articles

**www.journeywoman.com**, is a broad on-line resource for women on the subject of travel. The site highlights international travel, travel during pregnancy and quality of accommodations

#### **Random Thoughts**

The eyes are blind, one must look with the heart.  
—Saint Exupery

Complete possession is proved only by giving.  
—Andre Gide

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