

At the end of everyone's life it is common to compile some "vital statistics" which seek to say something about us and about the lives that we lived.

So here are some of the numbers I compiled about Nana:

- 91 Years she lived (March 4, 1912 - July 8, 2003)
- 24 Number of years she was married to Captain Joseph McCormack of the Norwood Fire Department
- 41 Number of years she spent as a widow
- 15 Number of minutes before her anniversary when she died. (As my mother said, it was the first time Nana ever met him early for anything.)
- 6 Children, 16 Grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren (with more appearing nearly every day)
- 4,872 Minutes we spent each Christmas watching her unwrap presents without ripping the paper
- 17.8 Minutes it took from the time you said "Goodbye Nana" until you actually made it to the car with a various assortment of clothes, food, and of course, change for the tollbooth and a few dollars pressed into your hand "just because"
- 2.8 Metric tons of newspapers removed from the house
- 23 Average number of pamphlets she'd pick up at a rest stop on any road trip
- 4 Minimum number of times she would say "Oh my heavens" during any given family event
- \$12.41 Nana's electric bill.... for the year

I think it was the thought of her electric bill that made me remember a report that I had done about Nana in the 8th grade. We were supposed to interview someone who had lived through the Depression. The thought of trying to do this report was enough to churn my stomach. I couldn't imagine doing it and if I could have found a way not to do it, I would have. But since I believed at the time that Nana was the oldest living person on earth [she was 73], I knew she would be the person I would end up interviewing.

At the end of the interview, I realized that I had gained a valuable insight into her life from the conversations that I had with her in order to do that report. The Depression was a major influence in her life and opened my eyes to understand her better by understanding what she had lived through. So I was amazed and happy when my mother was able to pull out the original report last night. I read through it and would like

to read to you a small portion of that report:

The biggest influence she thinks the Depression had on her was that she knows the value of a dollar [does she ever!] and always gives money to her children and grandchildren whenever she sees them, just in case they are in need and she thinks she can help them. She also saves things such as old magazine clippings, old newspaper clippings, string, and just about anything you can think of. She also has an electric bill of about two cents a year because she does not like the thought of putting money in the electrician's pocket. She does not raise the thermostat above three degrees Celsius for the same reason. All this seemed a bit silly to me before this interview, but I am almost certain that the reason she does all these things is not because she herself suffered during the Depression, but because she saw friends suffering and wants to help them whenever she can. [As my mother said] she could be down to her last nickel and if someone needed it, she would give it to them. So people may laugh at the things she keeps or the generosity of her "dear old soul"... they may throw away things that she has collected, but no matter who they are, if she can help someone, anyone, she will try to the last breathing moment she has. I think the Depression did change her, to be a better person than most, and better than I will ever be.

The last number I have for Nana is 6.... The number of years she spent in the nursing home. By the time she was finally called back home to heaven, I think many of us felt that God had made her wait too long. Personally I think God might have wondered if He could handle her, so He kept her waiting for a long time.

When the time finally came, we were relieved and happy for her, but sad for ourselves because we know we will miss her in our lives.

But I have a vision of her now: in heaven with her husband, with family and friends who have gone before her. She's smiling and happy. The cupboards are full. I can smell a turkey cooking... and over in the corner I think maybe I can see just a small stack of newspapers.

Her body and mind are whole again. She is with her beloved husband, surrounded by all the love that she gave through all her many years, surrounded by the love of all those who miss her down here on earth. One day we'll all meet again around that giant dining room table, laughing and talking and never realize that we were separated for a time. But until then I will hold onto this vision: Nana is home again.

Thanks be to God for the life of one of His Saints,
Mary Alice McCormack.
AMEN.