

Yesterday, as I write this, the radio was playing in the background while I went through my usual early morning routines. It's my favourite time of day, before the sibling wars begin anew. The same ground is fought over daily and the pleas for my adjudication on the issue of who spends the most time in the bathroom depends on who is on what side of the door that morning.

That's why I put my feet on the floor at least 30 minutes before everyone else. I enjoy pattering around at my own pace, turning over thoughts without the interruption of questions regarding laundry, breakfast and where the black socks have hidden themselves.

My husband has been away on a business trip for 3 weeks now so everyday finds me driving one or the other of our daughters to some practice or medical appointment or entertainment with their friends. Weeks of giving rides to friends and staying up late to bring everyone back to their respective homes. Weeks of ignoring the latest in German thrash death metal. Actually, the music is a good thing because it plays over the squealing voices discussing teenage life events I'd forgotten from my time and really don't want to know about in my daughters. Not the big issues, mind you, just those eternal who's breaking up with and did you hear what she said to and can you believe Mr. Wallace actually made us...

Yesterday, I was trying to think of what time I'd have to leave the office to pick up one daughter to get her to the orthodontist and back to school in time for an exam. The least amount of time away from work was part of the equation as my employer's patience is starting to wear a bit thin. I can't screen the calls, take messages, field the easy questions, if I'm sitting in a doctor's office across town. Not that my work is rocket science, I realize but then again, most rocket scientists have wives and lab assistants to spare them these petty, ongoing fetching and delivery demands.

Yesterday was the one year anniversary of a tragic shooting of 4 RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe, Alberta. If you have family or friends in the law enforcement field, it's the sort of story that generates a whole spectrum of emotions. Even the general all purpose citizen might take a moment to remember the events, the sacrifice of four young men in the name of duty.

Normally that radio story would have made a brief emotional impression and I'd move on to the next item. It didn't; I didn't. A year ago, in the early morning of that same day, with only a nurse as witness, my mother slipped quietly out of this life into the next. We knew her time was near but it wasn't any easier to lose the last tie to childhood: to feel bereft, an orphan at the age of 50.

A year later, I sat, still an orphan. For the past year every day has had some

moment in it where I remember an event from my childhood or something my mother said or how my father looked after making a joke. It's a feeling that never goes away.

For just a few minutes I wonder if the measure of a life is what we do or what we leave behind? Is it how we treat people on our way through? Maybe the old Methodists were right and that God's blessing was displayed in how much gold we amassed during our four score and ten – that faith was more important than good works.

Mom was old fashioned. When she married she put aside her career ambitions, despite being well known in Calgary for her radio work, musical comedy and theatre performances. This was how things were done then and, though she made it clear on many occasions just how unfair she felt that system to be, she accepted it as the role of women in the world.

She worked at being a mother and housewife as hard as she could and made jokes about her failings in that field. In these later years I've learned her dark moments weren't from from resentment but depression. And how much she must have struggled to keep the black dog from her family.

Dad was a teacher, an actor and well known around the city. He was always in plays, directing or advising others and every so often I'd sink into my desk

as dad would appear in a lab coat in some educational film being shown in the classroom. When he died, suddenly, two years ago, there were articles in the newspaper, a tribute on the local CBC television evening news program. For his funeral the church was full, there were three priests saying the mass (two Monseigneurs and the resident priest from St. Joseph's High School). There was even a police escort out to the cemetery to keep traffic under control.

Mom was a mom. She took care of us to the best of her ability. She volunteered with the CWL and every so often, appeared on stage at the amateur theatre company – Walterdale – she, dad and a few other friends established back in the '50's. There were a few pews filled at her funeral and the parish priest who'd never met mom, celebrated the mass because it was his church, his duty.

But philosophy and rhetoric will have to wait; I'll come back to the question of how to measure the worth of a person another time. The schedule of the day still has to be followed, the needs of the family tended to and there isn't time to walk by the water, tossing pebbles into the waves, gazing pensively into the misty distance. I have to get on with the day; make the bed, get the kids up and get myself dressed for work.