

## Eulogy for Theresa Turner Hart

There was an ancient maple standing by our father's gravesite.  
It blew down and my brother's had a sapling planted to take its place.  
In the years to come its roots will hold my parents gently together.  
It will lift its branches to the skies above them in perfect prayer.  
It will unfold its leaves to shade them, and in so doing  
express an even more ancient truth, as in this poem by Nancy Wood.

You shall ask  
What good are dead leaves  
And I will tell you  
They nourish the sore earth.  
You shall ask  
What reason is there for winter  
And I will tell you  
To bring about new leaves.  
You shall ask  
Why are the leaves so green  
And I will tell you  
Because they are rich with life.  
You shall ask  
Why must summer end  
And I will tell you  
So that the leaves can die.

Theresa Turner was born before the Great War.  
She was a stunning beauty, with raven hair and eyes as blue as the sky above us.  
She lived through the Great Depression.  
She suffered her family's losses in the Second World War.  
Her life affirming response was to marry Jack, a marriage lasting 68 years.  
She raised her children through the 40s, 50s, 60s, and the 70s.  
She so enjoyed her grandchildren in the 60s, 70s, 80s, and the 90s,  
and would so have enjoyed her great grandchildren  
had she not suffered the unrelenting, merciless onslaught of Alzheimer's,  
meeting that horror with dignity, courage and grace.  
Terry and Jack, through those children and grandchildren and great  
grandchildren, have created 955 years of life, and counting, 31 descendants,  
good souls all.

Therese was a dutiful daughter, Terry a caring sister and a good friend.  
Theresa was a loving wife and Mom the nurturing center of our lives,  
the goddess of small things:  
of spaghetti sauce simmering all afternoon to its full rich flavor,  
on a good day, the provider of rhubarb pie after supper,  
at Reveillon, tourtiere,  
and when the Bridge Club came, dream squares that would melt sweetness  
into your mouth, and tea,  
tea enough served at that kitchen table to float a boat down the Canal, twice.

Small deeds? Perhaps.  
But great I think in the sight of her Creator, whose 1<sup>st</sup> commandment is love.  
I think God must be so pleased with Theresa.  
Mourn? I don't think so.  
She is with her God for eternity, and will be with us until the end of our  
days.

But lest you think our mother was a pious, plaster-filled saint, you need to  
know that she could be a dangerous woman to cross. We lived for a month  
in a cottage at Ile Perrot near Montreal, prior to moving back to Ottawa.  
One day an armada of about twenty local boys showed up at the shoreline to  
howl insults at us. Greg was ready for a suicide mission but Mom thrust him  
aside, grabbed a broom, and ran down the lawn with her skirts flying,  
whirling this weapon above her head. They ran in terror.

Like her sisters, she liked to cut a figure. At our local church in Alta Vista  
there was an annual contest – fought like the Olympics – known as WHO  
CAN LOOK BEST ON EASTER SUNDAY? For a month Mom's battle  
plans would be laid out on the floor – paper patterns to be cut and sewn.  
The Easter outfits! On the great day of the competition, Mom marched into  
church with a sparkling new outfit, her two little duckling daughters  
parading behind. She was in the medals every time.

Celebrate with me now the life of Theresa Turner Hart,  
who was our mother, our sister, our friend.  
This poem by Shirley Murray speaks to our sense of gratitude.

Give thanks for life, the measure of our days.  
mortal, we pass through beauty that decays,  
yet sing to God our hope, our love, our praise,  
hallelujah, hallelujah!

Give thanks for she who made her life a light,  
caught from the Christ flame, bursting though the night,  
who touched our hearts, whose care for us burned bright,  
hallelujah, hallelujah!

And for our own, our living and our dead,  
thanks for the love by which our life is fed,  
a love not changed by time or death or dread,  
hallelujah, hallelujah!

Give thanks for hope, that like the wheat, the grain,  
lying in darkness does its life retain  
in resurrection to grow green again,  
hallelujah, hallelujah!

Ottawa, May 26, 2010