

Nancy Tews - A Remarkable Grandma

I've had the honor of collecting stories and thoughts about Grandma from the perspective of her Grandchildren. Thank you to my cousins and siblings for sharing your memories.

Nancy Tews was a remarkable grandma and many of our memories with her were made in her home. Walking into the farmhouse, we'd be greeted by the smell of Grandma's masterpieces— sheet cakes, cookies, BBQ beef, baked beans, cheesy potatoes, custard, peach cobbler and homemade ice cream were among our favorites. The grandkids could ALWAYS have second and third helpings, but Grandpa would get a sharp poke in the side from Grandma if HE ate too much! Heartfelt effort went into the food she made for us. When thanking her for the delicious meals – Grandpa was quick to jump in and say, “wellll I've been slaving in the kitchen all day” to which Grandma would roll her eyes and ask when he had EVER cooked in his life. And when we would try to do the dishes she would decline with, “no, go and visit with everyone, I'll clean up.”

Laughter filled Grandma's house and backyard as we played all kinds of games. We loved to jump on the big yellow trampoline under the birch tree and swing on the swing set next to her raspberry bushes. Grandma loved her flowers and she loved to have a mowed lawn. She bravely taught many of us how to mow. Through the years, all of us played with the same toys found in the coat closet – a bucket of Legos, a fire truck, crane, cowboy figures, my little ponies, a funny looking troll or two, and wooden blocks. Grandma's big blue hot tub was the location of some wild cousin hot tub parties. She would sit by the hot tub and watch us swim with a towel over her lap to wipe up too much splashing.

Sunday mornings were for going to church and Sunday evenings were for popcorn and visiting. Grandma would put the kernels in the same air popper she'd had for 30+ years. The popcorn would flow into a large plastic tub where the perfect amount of melted butter and salt was added. She'd deliver the popcorn to us and to Grandpa in the living room with the infamous blue and brown carpet. That carpet showed every piece of dropped popcorn, and while WE never got in trouble for spilling, Grandpa definitely did!

Grandma loved to help us. Often you were handed a bag with your mended clothing neatly folded inside. She could get any stain out, replace any zipper or alter any of our dresses. She took pride in this! Only one stained item of mine was ever returned to me.

In an almost disgusted voice she said, “sometimes it’s best to cut your losses and buy another,” and then handed me a \$10 bill. She ironed our white shirts for church, sewed us baby blankets, made doll clothes, and took pockets from worn jeans and turned them into beautiful Levi quilts. A frequent question to us all was, “did you bring me any mending?”.

Grandma’s house was full of music – piano lessons, duets played with grandchildren, and her 50 CD changer on shuffle. During Christmas time, she’d have the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on the TV, and her house was magical with colorful lights, her miniature Christmas village, and carefully wrapped gifts tied with yarn or ribbon. We’d have more popcorn and watch classic movies like *White Christmas* and *It’s a Wonderful Life*.

On Grandma’s kitchen counter, you’d find her calendar where she noted our events in her elegant handwriting. She made it a point to attend our 4-H shows, games, graduations, and recitals. Grandma also saved the funnies from the newspaper, and the grandkids could come over to read them paired with milk and cookies. She’d cut out news articles about agriculture, or any other topic she thought would interest us, and send them in the mail.

Part of the summers were spent canning produce from her garden. This was a labor-intensive process, so she’d spread an old sheet on the floor and put on a movie while we snapped green beans. Grandma would patiently guide us through the complex steps of canning, her finger tracing the text of her trusted *Ball Blue Book*. From freezer corn to golden peaches to savory beans and jewel-toned jellies, you could taste the care in every jar she produced.

We got a front row seat to Grandma’s role as a farm wife, bringing us along on her tasks. She was the engine behind the scenes—hauling parts from town for Grandpa or coordinating endless cycles of meals for the crew. After delivering a 'field lunch,' we’d sit together at the dusty edge of the crop, watching the tractors and combines. She made spreads of food for us on branding days, packed lunches for cattle drives, and brought creamies out at just the right time on hot summer days. And Grandma was smart. Grandpa would pay us to pick rock out of the fields and we’d be paid cents for every rock picked. At lunchtime, Grandma would teach us how to negotiate for better pay!

Spending time on the farm was both work and play. Farm work with Grandpa, refueling with Grandma's cooking, and then piling into the farm truck for an ice cream cone in town. Of course, the best days ended at Nat-Soo-Pah, where Grandma would treat us to an afternoon on easily the best water slide in Idaho. Many good memories were made at this pool by the Tews Grandchildren.

One grandson wrote, "When I think of spending time with Grandma, I don't think of things, toys, fancy items, or entertainment. I think of genuine connection, time slowing down, simple yet profound conversation, the opportunity to escape the world, and the chance to learn how to work." One granddaughter wrote, "I loved when she would take my hand during our conversations, because it made me feel so loved & showed how much she cared to hear what I had to say."

Grandma was proud of her missionaries – 13 grandsons and granddaughters served around the world. One grandson said that Grandma told him to look for her the day he left on his mission. Quote, "As I drove by her house on Poleline road, there she was at her front door, waving goodbye with her white handkerchief. Once I was on my mission, I remembered her great faith, and when I was sick, scared, or in danger, I knew she was praying for me. If my faith wasn't enough, I knew I could count on the Lord to hear her."

As years passed, the grandkids brought children of their own back to the farm. Every visit was treated like a celebration, with Grandma gathering as many generations as she could around the table for supper. There was a unique medicine in those visits. No matter how discouraged you felt when you arrived, Grandma and Grandpa had a way of sending you back into the world feeling loved, encouraged, capable, and rejuvenated."

And even when we weren't under their roof, Grandma stayed close through texting, sending messages like, – Peach pie party here tonight, how was your game?, come for popcorn? how are the kids? getting soda for the harvest crew, what kind do you prefer? and "if you need anything call Grandpa, I lost my hearing aids", followed by, "I found my hearing aids, Grandpa says I'm grounded, help!"

Grandma's last voicemail left for me was the day she fell. At 89 years old she said, "Hi Jessica, it's Grandma. I just wondered if you needed any help today with the kids or anything. Let me know, bye." This came at 6:45 in the morning, before the kids or I were even awake.

Grandma told us she was proud of our efforts, saying, “Good on you!” with a bright smile. Her love for us was individual and all-encompassing, shown by uplifting and serving us. Even as a guest in our homes, she was the first to reach for a dish towel or a crying baby. With more than her share of health struggles, she never allowed pain to dim her spirit or distract her from being the grandmother that she wanted to be.

Saying goodbye at the end of visiting Grandma and Grandpa inevitably came. With the car packed, the kids loaded, and a batch of her cookies on the center console, we’d have one final glimpse of Grandma. There she’d be—framed in her kitchen window or by the back door—waiting for us. She’d offer her kind smile and raise her hands high, waving as we pulled away. It was her way of showing her love, one more time.

A few days after her fall, Grandma told one grandson, 'I am going to get better... I just need to rest.' Grandma, we see now that you truly are better, and your rest is well-deserved. We wave goodbye to you for now, but not for long, knowing that this time on earth is but a blink of an eye. We rejoice that you are free from the burdens of a tired body, we are only sad that we cannot visit your farmhouse in heaven today. We dearly miss the warmth of your embrace.

How blessed are we to have been Grandma’s Grandchildren! And like another grandson said, “No earthly glory, accolades, honors, or positions can compete with the quiet power she was and is in our lives.” Without a doubt, she is still cheering us on.

Grandpa, we love you so much, and want to give this to you. I took this photo during your 70th wedding anniversary. I’ve always noticed and admired the beauty in Grandma’s hands and the character in yours. Though wrinkled, scarred, callused, and worn, they tell the story of tireless devotion. Grandma’s hands are part of her legacy, and we – her twenty grandchildren and forty-five great-grandchildren – will follow her example... serving, helping, uplifting and loving.

Grandma, I love you so. All of your grandchildren do. Until we meet again.