

Francis J. Shields
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file

September 7, 1989

Dear Margaret,

I hope this letter finds you well, as the last time we had contact you were recovering from a recent sickness, and possibly hospitalization, as I recall.

This is to inform you that we buried my mother at Holy Cross Cemetery in Brooklyn last Tuesday, after a funeral Mass at her old parish, St. Patrick's in Fort Hamilton. Mom died last Friday, Sept. 1, at the nursing home in Portland, Maine where she had been for about 5 or 6 years.

Her death was not unexpected, as she had slowly been slipping away over the last year or so - for want of eating, and of hearing or seeing well - and very infrequently was in communication verbally or aurally with those around her. I don't know what the death certificate says, but I think you could say her system just wore out. The day previous to her death Ronnie had gone in to see her (Ron visited almost every day) and found her not taking any food from the aides, and with tremors and shaking of her hands and mouth. Ronnie fed her as much as she would take, which was little enough, and left word to be called if there was a change. Ron was called in at 4:15 am on Friday, and saw that her shaking and tremors had gone, but was told that Mom's heart rate was three to four times normal, and that her breathing was slow and shallow. Ronnie passed the word along to the rest of us, and stayed with our mother through the rest of the morning. She was joined by a lovable old French nun in praying and keeping the vigil until about 11 am, when the nun had to report for another duty. Ron continued praying her rosary and holding and hugging Mom, and talking to her quietly, until she died peacefully around 11:30 am. It was not a painful ending, Margaret, and we are fully aware how much it might have been so. Therefore we are grateful to the Lord, whose faithful servant she certainly was, for her happy death with Ron holding her hand and praying her "across."

Her wake and funeral in Brooklyn were attended by all her children from Maine and Maryland and New York, and by about 12 grandchildren and 4 or 5 great-grandchildren, plus some old friends from Brooklyn. She is buried with my father in her family plot (Kirwan/O'Connor). At her death she was 96-1/2 years of age, and she leaves behind her children and grandchildren who will sorely miss her, but who realize she lived a long and upright life, one of hard work and love, and that she surely has earned a place of merit and honor in God's eternal home.

Margaret, I regret having to break this news to you, but I felt you wanted to be informed. Please remember Gen in your prayers, that she may continue her prayers for all of us in the life hereafter just as she did in this one.

Love,

Frank Shields