Remarks, delivered at the Memorial Service for Margaret Lubbers on August 15, 1991

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MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MARGARET LUBBERS
AUGUST 15, 1991

Last week, while going through my mother's papers, I came across a brief autobiography she had written in 1986 to share, I believe, with her PEO sisters. She concludes by writing, "... at the ripe old age of 86 years we landed at Porter Hills, where together we spent three happy retired years. But time has a way of ending all things, and Irwin's time came last year on September 8th. But after 62 years of happy togetherness, with all the blessings and joys through all those years, I am content to go on to my end, living with precious memories and the love of my family and many friends. God has certainly led me all the way. He'll lead me to the end." And so He has. Today we come here to reflect on our memories of her, and the abundant capacity for love she had for family and friends.

My mother liked picnics. Toward the end of a hot, dusty Iowa day, we piled into the 1937 Dodge, followed the brick street to the edge of town, then turned on the gravel road to the strip mine a few miles south. There were no lakes where we lived and strip mining provided the only ponds, formed by rain water caught between piles of earth and slag. At seven years of age, to me those ponds and the slag rising in the midst of an Iowa woods were as exciting and pristine as a glistening lake in the Swiss Alps. My father joined us, usually later, driving out with friends who were included in the picnic. Often he had time only to shed tie and coat from his business attire to make the last car to the picnic. There
were no two-car families in our town in 1938.

My mother, helped sometimes by friends, spread the blankets on the ground, sprayed with flit, covered the blankets with table cloths, and laid out a supper of baked beans, potato salad, rolls, fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, and a hot dish. Sometimes the boys were sent for fire wood and we cooked hamburgers or roasted hot dogs and always marshmallows for dessert.

While the picnic was being laid out we boys usually made a dash for the strip mine. We who were young and imaginative created a world of adventure and warfare among the rising mounds and the lakes of the strip mine.

Driving home at night I often times nestled between my mother and father in the front seat of the car. I still remember the warmth, the serenity, the total sense of well being. Sometimes we sang sentimental, sometimes humorous or patriotic songs. There are so many ways to bond a family and friends. In those days, I remember my mother was the center.

I don't know why, but I took considerable interest in my mother's shopping trips to Des Moines. Younkers was Iowa's premier department store. She usually left on the 43 mile trek to the capitol city in mid morning after I was fed and off to school or some other adventure. Her return in late afternoon with packages and boxes was an event. I had to see what the style movers for the middle class had persuaded her to purchase. She would show the family and explain why she thought a dress, suit, or hat was appropriate for her. Her budget was limited, yet my complete
unawareness of the meaning of real wealth contributed to my belief that my mother set the pace when it came to fashion. She always looked great. Over the years I came to understand that wearing clothes to personal advantage was secondary to her. That always being the best kind of person you could be was primary, and dressing attractively was part of presenting your best self. My mother never mistook style for substance, but she had substance with style in all things.

Where we lived when I was a boy seemed grand to me. Upon adult reflection it was a modest President's residence. Since the one hotel in the small Iowa town was unsuitable for college guests, our house was the college hostelry when artists and visiting dignitaries came to the campus. The auditor of the college was a good family friend, and he stayed for two week stints each year. The most noted guest who came to the house for dinner was Princess Julianna of the Netherlands. The excitement in the kitchen reached such a peak that one of the ladies, who was helping my mother, put salt in the sugar bowl, a discovery made by Julianna when she took her coffee. My mother could cope with situations like that with grace and humor, as did Julianna. Hardly a month passed without a steady flow of visitors to our house on the Central College campus.

While all of this official activity was in progress, she had two boys to raise, and she attended her mother who lived with us, mediating disagreements between my father and his mother-in-law. The house was always open to relatives too. They came regularly from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, and sometimes when they had
special needs she was always ready to help.

All this appeared normal to me. My mother made it seem that way. What needed to be done she did and she discovered the power of positive thinking before our good family friend Norman Vincent Peale wrote about it.

When I was asked to identify my parents' occupations on an application form, I always felt uncomfortable labelling my mother as housewife. She was that, of course. But the description was incomplete, and did not convey her own sense of self, though she would be hard pressed to come up with a different identification. I couldn't write down housewife and co-President or assistant to the President for public and personal relations. But that is what she was. My father decided what job offer to accept after consulting her. When that decision was made, the partnership was forged and the commitment to the work and to the institution was shared. My father had the title, held the spotlight, and was the object of most of the praise and criticism that came with his job description. Her responsibilities were more low key, yet necessary to the effectiveness of the college Presidency. She managed the social obligations, dealt individually with friends and alumni, contributed to the church and the community, and overall combined the stamp of her personality with that of her husband's on the Presidential administration of the two colleges they served.

During my adult years my mother in many ways expressed to me her support for the aspirations of women. Not because she felt deprived, but because she in her life felt she had contributed
equally to the career she and her husband shared, and took satisfaction in his achievements as he did in hers.

As important as all of the career responsibilities and personal relationships that accompanied them were to her, as important as performing duties with style and good taste, the bedrock of my mother's life was love and loyalty to family and friends. She was unequivocal in giving it. My father said to me, "I think your mother has such a strong attachment to family because hers was disturbed by the death of her parents when she was an infant." Fortunately, she was adopted by a nurturing and loving childless couple when she was three. She says in her autobiography, "I never felt any loss of any kind and I don't see how my natural parents could have done more for me than my adopted parents did."

My mother wrote sketches about each of her grandchildren. She describes how she would lull her grandson Don to sleep when he was an infant three months old. Several months later she travelled to New Jersey where we lived. Finding Don with a friend having difficulty quieting him, she proceeded to go into her act with the usual result. She concludes that memory by saying, "By that time he was a little more than six months old, and I realized then how important it is to give three and four month old, little ones, happy memories." Nurture - that was my mother's specialty. All children deserved it. Our friendships depended on it, and all families were bonded by it. It is the raw material for love, it is best begun at the beginning of life, it should never cease, and it is the only guarantee for lasting, loving relationships. She
cultivated nurture about as well as any imperfect being could.

As a result she leaves behind in her PEO sisterhood, in the churches she attended, and in the towns and cities where she lived, more friends than most who live ninety-five years. Among her relatives, she was and will live in memory as the embodiment of family values and commitment to family. Her grandchildren and great grand children were, in her last years, her greatest human treasure and she leaves to them a legacy of nurture that can serve them well as their lives unfold.

I came across a note my father wrote to my mother seven years ago last April. It says, "Happy Birthday Sweetheart. I love you! At 88 you're still my lovely, loving mate." I can offer no better example of nurture and its result than that.

My brother and I, as our lives have progressed, from the beginning to the present, always have known that we have one of the special mothers. Knowing that you are always loved, knowing that there is someone who will sacrifice for your welfare, knowing that you will be accepted in success and failure, knowing that you are trusted, that is the human currency a mother like ours invests in her children. There was never a doubt about her. We will go to the end of our days with abiding respect and love for her because she gave it in abundance to us and profoundly affected our lives by it.

My mother's religion was preeminent in her life. She would like me to say something about her belief on this occasion, even though most of you are aware of where she took her stand. In closing, I will do that.
My mother was not a fan of altar calls. She was concerned about exciting people to emotional fervor, and then making the sale. A decision to believe required thought, discussion, and contemplation, a blend of reason and emotion. The other way was endangered by superficiality and poor taste. That didn't mean she rejected the core of the message, and she was ready to tell you what that message meant for her. I see my mother as main-stream Reformed Church, the church of her birth, the church of her service and worship, the church of her heart, and the church where her life at the end is celebrated.

We sang the hymn, *He Leadeth Me* because her life was led by the person and promises of Jesus. His words were the most important for her. They explained the essence of truth and offered the only ultimate consolation. If she could speak to me now, as I read these words from the New Testament, she would say, "That's what I want to hear in my name. I want to leave this life with that testimony. I am happy you are reading those verses."

**John 14:1-6** -- "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whether I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest: and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
Philippians 4:8 & 9 -- Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

These are thoughts to ponder in remembrance of her.