

OPINION

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MY VIEW

Grandmothers' lessons are still with me today

As a new grandmother this Mother's Day I am thinking of my own, both gone from this world almost 50 years, yet reminding me how they showed up, and helping me in the role.

In 1964, a week after my Grandma Davidoff died from surgery complications, my Grandma Cohen, about to pay a shiva call, got hit by a car crossing the street and died immediately. I did not find the words, as I had for Grandma D, to write a poem.

Intensely social and conventional, Grandma C judged my quirky, misunderstood mother who struggled to fit in. Grandma C would come to our house for Friday dinner wearing a dark dress and long face, tighten her lips when we kissed her, and check in with Mom in the kitchen where a disagreement might ensue. At the

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table, she bragged about my country club uncle and the life he afforded his family, disapproving of my father's preference for literature to making money, showing little curiosity about me.

On Sunday visits to Grandma D's, I got hugs when Dad and I walked in. Then she put freshly baked kichel (sugar cookies) on a plate on the kitchen table. "Just for Nancy," she would say, her eyes gleaming. Dad walked around, shoving one after another into his mouth. "No one bakes like you, Ma."

At age 7, on a car trip to Florida, I listened to her stories of two Russian sisters, Mashington and Tashington, in the back seat with my head on her lap. After four days, she told my parents, "I never knew how smart Nancy was." I reminded her I hardly spoke. "That's why," Grandma D said.

She did not drive. Once or twice



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up. Later I called Grandma to continue our soap discussion, but really because she made me feel loved.

Every member of her clan felt that way. Anyone who did not think we were the smartest, most special people on earth would get a look from Grandma. Yet when my Aunt Dora, her younger daughter, came running to her with a suitcase and complaints about her husband, Grandma told her, "I bet he has something to say, too."

The mutual respect and adoration between Grandma D and her brood comforted me. The tension between my mother and Grandma C hurt. I believe Grandma C suffered from depression and, feeling guilty she had passed it down to Mom, could not embrace her or her children. I understand now, too, that praise and affection did not come naturally to her.

She showed up when it mattered - to take me to the movies on Saturday; to take me clothes shopping when my mother was hospitalized; and to help me bury my turtle. When Myrtle died, I insisted on having a funeral. My mother, already sick, would not participate. I needed a substitute mom. "She'll wear her dark dress and long face," I said, asking Dad to call her. Sure enough, a half hour later, she appeared in our back yard wearing both. My father dug a hole in which I placed Myrtle in her bowl. Then my sister, Dad, Grandma C and I put dirt, daffodils and dandelions on my little turtle's grave.

Should my grandson have and lose a pet for which he wants a funeral, I will be a respectful mourner and stand beside him. In the