

Eulogy for Angeline P. Tenedine

Remarks of WHH Rees at the Memorial Mass for Angeline Tenedine at the Franciscan Center in Meriden, CT, September 1, 2000

Nietzsche once said that the life of a great man ought to be summarized by three telling anecdotes. I would like to summarize the life of a great woman, Angeline Tenedine, with three telling anecdotes.

First, it was most important to her that her two children had the very best, had every opportunity possible. Education was crucial, so she wanted to make certain the money was available when they were of age. Housewives in the 1940s were not second wage earners, so she had to use her imagination. Next to her home in North Haven was a vacant lot that the family owned, on which she planted seeds and cared for their growth. When each child was ready to go to college, there were yew trees, which she sold and paid for some, if not all, of their tuition. She did this not to boast or to receive congratulations or to lord it over anyone. She did it because there was a need that had to be met. She did it as she did everything, with a kindly spirit, like fixing breakfast for her family.

Then, some years later, Joanne and I were married with four children and a new home. I was trying to start a new business and at one point ran out of money. I did not pay the phone bill for a month or two when the phone company shut off our phones. I was out of town on business, so Joanne rushed to her parents for help. Her father advanced enough money to get the service reestablished and said in frustration: "The man is hopeless". Ange, as she was known to her friends, quietly fixed a bag of groceries. I mention this not to criticize my father-in-law, for he was a wonderful man whom I deeply loved. I no doubt would have said the same thing in a similar circumstance. I mention it to highlight Ange's response to a crisis. And the bags of groceries arrived long after I could afford to pay my bills.

Lastly, after 93 very healthy years, which we thought were the result of her drinking 15 cups of tea a day with honey, she developed a blood clot on her foot. She never recovered from the operation to remove it and was forced to enter a nursing home. She was very unresponsive, the result of massive doses of painkillers, except once when I was leaving, I said: "Now, be a good girl, Gram". She perked up immediately and said: "I've always been a good girl". Two days before she died, she became somewhat alert, probably in the window just after one dose wears off and before another is administered, she waved to a passing aide, who had been especially kind to her, and whispered, "Thank you". Not "Why me?" but "Thank you".

This great lady was gracious, generous, and grateful; and for that she is fondly remembered and will be sorely missed.