

Today we honor those who have touched us deeply and are now gone:

I pray for Nan, my mom's mom, now four decades gone and yet she's with me still. As a little tyke sitting cross-legged before her rocker, I listened as she told me about pioneer life in the mining camps of Colorado, during the late nineteenth century. She regaled me about the prospectors, old Chris Niedermeyer, "Picnic" Jim, Clyde Tuttle, her dear brother Frank; and their rugged, adventuresome childhood.

She spoke of her sister Annie who cooked for many prospectors along the trails. She would read Shakespeare to fifty hungry miners while stirring an enormous Kettle of Stew.

At the mines there was " 'Drillin', Loadin', and Firin' " blasting open the petrified earth, forcing her to expose her mineral riches. Riches those miners never saw. But my riches come from Nan's stories. Once she inscribed an unforgettable poem in her one-room schoolhouse penmanship. I have kept that scrap of paper with me ever since. The poem salutes those, like Nan, who left us long ago:

"For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest."

["Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyham," E. FitzGerald trans., XXII]

*Amen.*