

I knew Nancy Hardenbergh only as Nona, and she was my grandmother. I feel a little unqualified to be speaking today because I didn't know her for very much of her life. But I did know her for all of mine. She was different than all of the other grandmothers. She didn't pinch my cheeks or bring me home made cookies. She was special.

Every year Nona sent the cousins advent calendars. She made the calendar itself with a little pocket for each day of December, up until Christmas. It was terribly exciting every morning to reach into that day's pocket and unwrap a small present. Sometimes it was a coin, or a little toy car. I always marveled at each trinket. She was incredible, to find 24 little presents for eventually six of us, every year. She was very generous, especially with her time.

Every summer we go down to the house in Quogue, and once every summer Nona would take us to the Quogue Beach Club. While the 6 kids had gone there every day when they were younger, it was a special treat for us. We would park in our reserved parking spot, which was quite near the front of the lot. We would spend the day at the beach and then get to have lunch at the restaurant. At the beach club. I would eat a hamburger, although I remember everyone ordering a "chester", a term that I have only ever heard at the beach club and I still don't think I know exactly what a "chester" is. But then, that would only add to the mystery of the day. During lunch everyone would come over and say hi to Nona. People knew her, and liked her. I loved the day we got to go to the beach club, it was fun and exciting, just like Nona was.

And boy she was fun and exciting. She was the biggest sports fan I know, and I'm from Boston, so that's saying something. She and my dad and others would even bet on the games. She would swear and be rude, and didn't give a damn what anybody thought. But she was also deeply kind, always making conversation with the quietest people in the room. She always went out of her way to welcome any extras in the house.

I always experienced her as a strong matriarch, who held this family together. Nona would decide things and that would be the end of the story. And in a family that would otherwise speak up with a range of opinions and ideas, this, more than anything showed the true love and respect that Nona received from everyone. She is already greatly missed, and will forever be greatly loved. By all of us. Thank you.