

## OUR COLLECTIVE SOUL

I believe the soul is the spiritual link between Mother Earth and every mother's child. It's a thought connection that transcends physical bonds—the lingering memory that keeps me grounded.

Mom passed away at forty-nine years, two months, and fifteen days. I foolishly believed her voice fell silent. I was wrong. I forgot to listen.

As I drug the trash can to the street on the day I turned forty-nine years, two months and fifteen days, I glanced skyward. The Big Dipper loomed larger than life. It was Mom. The thought felt as though she tucked me into bed with my favorite quilt. Her voice sang out, waiting for me to connect with her soul, the part of her still within me. The answers were right there, all I had to do was ask.

I stared at the Big Dipper. “Am I doing it right?” I asked. “What have I missed? Talk to me,” I said, hoping to hear her voice. I knew what she would say; I just had to stop and listen.

“Why do you ask if you're doing it *right*? Haven't you realized there's no such thing? It's all a matter of deciding what's important and the way you treat it.” The memory of her words felt like her morning hugs.

“Where do I go from here? Can you still be my guide?” I felt alone knowing I lived longer than Mom.

“You know that answer.” Mom had a look that pierced through doubt and uncertainty.

Her words rang loud and clear.

“Open your head. The answers are there. Your soulful earthly journey will help you figure out the questions.” Mom knew how to grant confidence for the moment at hand. She celebrated the pure joy of life and never wasted time. If you woke up, it was a good day, and every day was a good day for fishing. There was always room for an extra person at the dinner table. Ice cream was a staple and chocolate was a food group. Play together—stay together. The dogs ate pancakes with homemade maple syrup for

breakfast. Menstrual cramps were not an excuse. Expectations were high. Discretion was always the order of the day.

Pieces of Mom's soul linger within me. Through her I learned how to live, fight the good battle, and enjoy the little things. It's the stuff of faith, resolve, tenacity, and goodwill—my quilt of comfort.

“Don't waste the moment,” Mom would say. “Cherish who you are, what you've accomplished, and embrace the challenges yet to come. If you help make the world a better place, you can go to bed and sleep well.”

I realize Mom's silent voice sings in the chorus of life. The refrain is strong and her song gives me strength. Mom's soul-connected playful heavenly music pours from the Big Dipper.

Generations pass, but their souls continue to sing. This I believe.