

“...there’s never a wish better than this, when you’ve only got 100 years to live.” – from the lyrics of the song “100 years” by John Ondrasik (*Five for Fighting*)

Maurine McNee Campbell: Regular readers of this Laptop Report know that I sometimes get a little more personal with you than perhaps is customary for the writings of a member of Congress engaged in the nation’s political discourse. This is one of those times.

My mother, Maurine McNee Campbell, passed away a couple of weeks ago in Los Angeles. She was 96. As an English friend wrote me with a reference to the game of cricket, “96 is good innings.” Yes, good innings, indeed.

She was born in the small Midwestern town of Cottonwood Falls, Kansas just 4 months after the “guns of August” started firing in Europe to begin World War I. She moved to Los Angeles as a little girl. Her parents had honeymooned there and decided they would move there someday. She lived 60 of her 96 years in the L.A. house her father built in the 1920s.

She was a woman of great grace, dignity and stoicism. She carried her hardscrabble, Midwestern, protestant ethic in a wrapping of supreme elegance.

I am privileged to have been raised by her. I, and others who knew her, will miss her.

But also, America will miss people like her. Her life was not without pain. One of the disadvantages of a long life is that almost everyone close to you dies first. In addition to many friends, she lost a young sister, both her parents, her brother, her husband of 67 years, her only niece and her only daughter. But, she carried herself with such customary dignity and grace through every trouble. I remember when much of her mouth had to be rebuilt after an automobile accident in which she was not wearing a seatbelt. She did not look for someone to sue. She didn’t curse either driver. She didn’t whine or wail or ever bring it up again, although she never talked or looked the same afterwards. She quietly dealt with it, and moved on. You see, she didn’t want to burden you with her problems. Help others where you can, but your first

duty is to ensure that you take care of yourself and do not load your trials onto others.

Life will throw all of us unpleasantness and difficulties. Sometimes they are of our own making and other times they are not. In much of our culture today, it seems that it is incumbent on the government, or our neighbors, or someone working harder than us to absorb our difficulties for us. Nothing, it seems, is our own fault or our own responsibility. And, one must scream one's troubles to the world because everyone else must carry our burden for us.

Maurine Campbell was the antithesis of that culture. America will have a lesser future if the dependency culture were to dominate the culture of self-reliance and work. She understood that. That is why she was engaged in politics from way before my birth. "We were Taft Republicans", she once explained to me to highlight her and my father's preference for the more conservative Ohio Senator Robert Taft in the 1952 Republican primary over native Kansan Dwight Eisenhower (and also in 1940 and 1948 over Dewey).

My mother never missed reading one of these missives, nor commenting on them. Every time I sit before this keyboard, the lessons of her life and her example will be with me.