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Subject: 2013 Thanksgiving Missive from Paul Stewart

For those of you who have received my Thanksgiving missives over the years, you may recall that I have often offered three items for your consideration, but again this year as I did last year, I'm sending you just one item that I hope you will find interesting and perhaps even inspirational.

In last year's missive, I shared an 8-minute YouTube video clip of my parents, John and Alberta Stewart, on their **70th wedding anniversary** on 14-March-2012. If you would like to view that YouTube video clip from last year, feel free to go to the following link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gm2iXGFYKJE>

Fast-forward a year – having lived over two years after entering hospice care, my dear Mother died – with a sharp mind to the very end – on 08-February-2013, just one month short of their 71st wedding anniversary. My mother was a bit of a living legend in her small town and nearly 500 people attended her memorial service. Not only was she beloved by her community and her children, she was beloved by her in-law children – no small feat. My wife Susan was asked to speak on behalf of the spouses of Mom's five children, so Susan formulated a 'top ten' list of how to be a great mother-in-law, inspired by her experience of being my Mother's daughter-in-law for 37 years. I invite you to read Susan's comments here:

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The year was 1974. I had just met a really cute, really nice guy and less than a week later he wanted me to meet his mother. Little did I know that I was about to meet a woman who would have a profound impact on my life. The woman whose life we are here to celebrate today. I'm Susan Stewart and for the past 37 years I had the privilege of calling Alberta Stewart "Mom." For those of you who are, or will some day be a mother-in-law, I'm going to share with you what I learned from the master.

Here's my "top ten" list of why I considered her my second Mom ... and after my own mother died, my only Mom:

- 1. I was 20 years old when I married Paul. Thankfully, his mother had the wisdom and patience to wait for me to grow into a suitable wife for her son. In those early years, she was the grown up ... and she resisted the urge to be critical or to ever let her hurt feelings come between our growing relationship. At the time, I wasn't aware that I was hurting her feelings, but I'm sure I did.*
- 2. Mom always treated me like she believed I was the perfect mate for Paul, even though I suspect there were times, especially early on, that she might have privately had her doubts.*
- 3. She gave me plenty of space. When we moved to Greensburg after graduating from Purdue, we lived on a farm just a few miles up the road from Mom and Dad. Somehow ... she had the self-control ... to never – not once – come to our home uninvited. Her patience paid off. In later years, she and Dad knew they were always welcome to stop by our Indianapolis home during their frequent trips to Purdue and they spent many weeks visiting us when we lived in Boston and San Diego.*

4. *Mom treated my children just like she treated her daughters' children. When I was expecting our first child – who would become Mom's 13th grandchild – a well-meaning woman warned me that my baby wouldn't be as special as the other grandchildren. That woman could NOT have been more wrong!!! Our children knew they were very special to – and very much loved by Grandma Stewart.*
5. *She accepted my housekeeping shortcomings. Even though she was an immaculate housekeeper, she ignored the "dust bunnies" under my beds ... and the clutter in my kitchen. There was one exception, though ... she couldn't stand the dust buildup under my refrigerator, so we had a deal that whenever she came to visit, she would get out the vacuum and take care of it herself!!!*
6. *She respected that her in-law children had other family obligations during holidays and she understood the conflicts that arise when couples try to navigate wanting to be in two places at the same time. Mom loved having all of her family together, but she never demanded that we be at her house on a particular day. Instead she graciously found other times when we could be together.*
7. *Even though she had successfully raised five children of her own, she always respected the way I was raising my two. She would offer advice if asked, she would share how she had done things, but she was never critical about how I was doing things.*
8. *Mom always praised whatever food I served her, acting like it was the most delicious meal she had ever eaten. And believe me, I am not an accomplished cook.*
9. *Mom respected that I was raised in different Christian denomination where I was more comfortable. I suspect it was disappointing to her when Paul and I joined my denomination's church when we lived here in Greensburg, but she never let it affect our relationship.*
10. *Mom treated me like a daughter and a friend. We were kindred spirits...city girls from Indianapolis who met our farmer husbands at Purdue and we both believed we had hit the jackpot when it came to the men we married. We truly enjoyed spending time together, especially when she and Dad came to stay with us for extended visits. I was always as comfortable having her at my house as I was having my own mother.*

Alberta Stewart enriched my life in countless ways. For the rest of my days, I will miss her and I am so thankful that I was blessed to be part of her family.

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As our Thanksgiving in the U.S. approaches this Thursday, we are healthy and happy, and my new little business is prospering far beyond my most optimistic expectations. For all of this and so much more, I am most thankful. (Someone has suggested to me that perhaps I need to "retire from retirement"!) My wish is that this message finds you also healthy and happy, and I wish you a 2014 of Peace and Prosperity.

All the best.

PAS.