

“A Faith That Never Faltered”

by Lorelei Pepe

My sweet mother has passed away now but used to sit and tell me many stories about her childhood and one of my favorites was about her great faith, as it got her through all the rocky times in her life. She told me it was due to an incident that happened when she was a young child.

Evelyn my mother was raised during the depression years and it was a very difficult time for her parents and two sisters, Eleanor and Margie. Evelyn was nine years old and was the middle child. Eleanor was twelve and Margie was only one. Her father whom they called “papa” was struggling to make ends meet with his little stationery store in Brooklyn, New York. He sold all the school supplies to the children who attended the high school directly across the street. To supplement his income, he also sold cigarettes and cigars that came in beautiful decaled, decorated boxes.

Evelyn and Eleanor had to work at the store everyday (for free) when they weren’t at school. They put in long hours and since Eleanor was the oldest, she could open and close the store and be trusted with the keys. When papa wasn’t there, she was the “boss” and Evelyn was her faithful employee. She always followed her instructions without ever questioning them.

One day while papa was home taking a nap, Evelyn and Eleanor were at the store when a box of expensive cigars was stolen. Neither one realized what had happened until the man ran out the door with the cigars and fled down the street and disappeared. Eleanor instructed Evelyn to “go home” immediately to get papa. “Be sure and tell him what happened before you come back to the store with him”, Eleanor said. Evelyn was “scared to death” but solemnly followed her command and walked slowly home wondering what was going to happen to her. She could barely breathe and was so frightened! You see papa had a terrible temper and because he was struggling so much just to put food on the table, Evelyn knew he would be furious!

Evelyn slipped into the tiny apartment and went directly to her small room and laid on the bed. She started to sob and cry. She could feel the tears coming

fast, burning her cheeks and she buried her face in the pillow on her bed. Then she composed herself and knelt down on her knees and prayed to God. She prayed long and hard. She asked that she didn't have to tell papa about the robbery. She prayed for a "miracle". She wanted to avoid the yelling and screaming that would ensue if he knew.

When papa awoke from his nap, he came by her room and took her small hand to go back to the store, as he did not want her sister to be alone. Evelyn was frozen with fear and they walked in silence. She felt her hand get all sweaty in his as she knew in a few blocks they would be there and she still could not speak.

As they reached the last block, Evelyn had a big lump in her throat and took a breath and was going to speak, but suddenly out of nowhere appeared a familiar figure. It was her uncle Andrew! Immediately he came running up to papa and asked him if had heard about the scoundrel that took off with the cigars! Papa dropped Evelyn's hand and ran into the store and spoke with Eleanor who confirmed the story. So Evelyn was "off the hook" and in all of the confusion, almost forgotten about, much to her relief. She just sat on the steps of the store, looked up and thanked God for her miracle.

So, because of this incident at the early age of nine, my mother's faith has never faltered, no matter what life threw at her along the way!