I was trying to keep a herd of cows from escaping our hastily assembled catchpen while Dad went to get the trailer when I saw my uncle Walter coming down the hill.
He mumbled something about the weather, but I knew right away that he hadn't come all this way to provide a weather forecast.
I knew what he was going to say next before he said it.
That was 20 years ago today, and it doesn't seem possible that so much time has passed since my grandmother Elsie Patterson left this world. Twenty years should seem like an eternity; it's over half of my life.
At that time I would have encouraged someone to seek a psychiatric evaluation if they predicted I would one day become the publisher of this newspaper. I was a decade from meeting the girl who would later become my wife. My kids weren't even imagined yet.
And yet although I've only seen her in family photo albums and her occasional visits to my dreams over the last two decades, not a day has passed without me thinking about her at some point and missing her.
I can still hear her singing "I'll Fly Away" on the front porch swing and taste her chocolate pie and sweet tea. I can still remember exactly what it smelled like when you walked into her kitchen. Or sleeping every night on the pillow that she made for me before I was born. My baby girl sleeps on it today.
Or riding to Sunday school in the backseat of a baby blue Mercury Comet with her and Paw Paw. After Paw Paw died she started driving that car, even though she'd never really driven before. She'd show up with a jug of ice water while we were working in the hayfield, and we'd be worried about her after she left until we knew she made it home safely.
She touched many lives outside of her own family. Since I named my daughter Elsie after her, I have been amazed at how many people have shared stories about my grandmother. Most of them were about how she helped someone or did something kind.
I saw a lot of those things with my own eyes as a child, and it was truly a blessing to grow up in an environment where that kind of thing was just considered normal everyday life. In today's society it seems like many people just ignore their neighbors whenever possible.
She was one of those people who had less than many and still found a way to do more than most. She gave many people in her little community a helping hand along the way when they needed it.
She raised four children who all became successful as adults and spoiled all of her grandchildren. I'm sure that all of us think we were her favorite.
Hopefully everyone reading this has someone who has made the kind of impact on their lives

that Elsie Patterson had on mine.
The realization this week that she has been gone for so long was shocking to me because she is so often on my mind. I have a hard time remembering some things I did last week, and yet so many memories of her are as vivid as if they just happened.
I know that there has to be others out there wondering how long it will be before they stop thinking about someone they love every day or missing them.
All I know for sure is that the answer isn't 20 years.
If that day ever comes, I'll let you know.