My mother, Nina Elizabeth Warren (N.E.W.), spent most of her long life (100 years) helping her husband and bringing up six children. My father eventually became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but Mom was the true Chief in our house.

Nina Elizabeth Warren was born in Sweden, March 9, 1893. She lived 100 years and one month doing what she knew best, caring for those she loved, helping where help was needed. She never asked for praise or sought a thank you for all that she did. She believed it was better to give than receive and that is how she lived her life. I have first-hand experience as the youngest in a clan of six.

During my childhood I cherished being near Mom. I often think about the songs she loved.....Onward Christian Soldiers; The Old Rugged Cross; Amazing Grace; and almost any song that Mahalia Jackson sang. Mom rarely sang but I often saw tears welling up in her beautiful brown eyes and wondered to myself, what was so sad, or maybe so happy to cause such emotion? I never asked but I wish I had.

The loss of a mother, father, two brothers and a husband before she was 29 years old may have been the catalyst. Mom’s inner strength, along with the emotional support from her sisters (Edith and Hannah), helped her deal with the losses. A difficult relationship with a very strict and rigid stepmother gave her an example of the mother she did not want to be.
Mom was a ball of energy. Barely five feet tall, four eleven to be exact, her body was packed with enough energy to meet any challenge. She changed very little until the last three years of her life. She exercised a minimum of 45 minutes a day on a rocker bike while watching her favorite television program, *Jeopardy*. A hip replacement at age 97 was not a blessing. Her options were to never walk again or risk surgery. Mom made her decision immediately. There were no second opinions and no discussion, she would have surgery. While her mind remained sound, her body failed to recover, preventing the independence she had always cherished.

Mom loved to cook and I loved everything she cooked.... well almost everything. She understood my pouting when I failed to eat the baked eggplant with a raw egg cracked on top. It must have been a Swedish dinnertime joke.

I’d hang out with Mom in the kitchen anytime, but particularly when she was in the cake-making mood. Angel food cake was one of her masterpieces. During the ages of five to seven I was a major player in the kitchen. Mom did everything by hand. She used a large ceramic platter for whipping the egg whites, saving the yokes for the deep dark chocolate frosting. The technique was critical. Bracing the platter against her waist and holding it level to avoid losing the slippery egg whites, she began whipping the eggs to a froth. Her arms were barely long enough to support the platter but she managed. She was not about to turn this job over to me with arms half as long as hers. I also needed to save energy and stamina for the responsibilities of clean-up. Soon she was adding cream of tartar and salt followed by sugar and flour, but this time it was a folding motion with a wire whisk. Just before oven time Mom added the finishing touches to the batter...nine drops of red coloring in one corner, nine drops of green in another corner and nine drops of yellow in another. A gentle mix of each color with the
white batter followed by a big sweeping figure eight to spread the colors throughout the batter was her artistic touch.

While the cake baked, it was clean-up time. Someone had to do it and I accepted the challenge. Licking the excess batter off the platter and implements was next to punishment. Can you imagine the pain and suffering I experienced? The chocolate frosting clean-up was more than I could bear, but somehow I did. Mom knew my weakness, so she made Penuche candy (brown sugar, vanilla extract and milk) or Devils Food cake with white sugar frosting. All were forms of punishment I learned to tolerate. I will NEVER forgive or forget her for those times.

It wasn’t all about sweets. Mom displayed her talents in the kitchen with such treats as Swedish meatballs; Swedish Pancakes(as thin as paper, the size of a dinner plate, filled with blackberry jam, rolled like a crepe and covered with powdered sugar); cream of tuna on toast; leg of lamb with mint jelly; corn beef hash, dumpling stew; spaghetti and meatballs; and occasionally oyster stew especially for Dad and me. The size of our family, with war rationing, required a focus on comfort foods with a lot of filling carbs.

We are all creatures of habit. Mom exceeded the norm. She never ate much after breakfast but always took time to have a morning cup of instant Nescafe with Saccharin (a small white sweetener pill that fizzed when dropped in hot coffee) and a touch of cream. She kept her coffee cup and serving plate in the oven (on low) so it would keep her coffee piping hot when she sat down. Her breakfast consisted of rye toast, blackberry jam and thinly sliced cheddar cheese. If grapefruit was in season she added a half a teaspoon of real sugar spread
evenly over the sectioned fruit. All this personal “pampering” came after Mom had taken care of everyone else.

It wasn’t all about the kitchen either. Mom was a walking calendar, a talking coordinator, a travel planner. She was also the Chief Financial Officer of the household, keeping a monthly Income and expense ledger that recorded an entry as little as 21 cents.

Dad’s monthly salary in 1934 as District Attorney of Alameda County was $300.00. Three adults and five children filled the home at 88 Vernon Street, I was to arrive in January 1935 adding to the population of the City, County, State and Nation. A pretty impressive entrance. Mom provided a personal meal program for me for the first few months so I never felt like I was a burden on the budget. However, Mom had details to the penny. The monthly average for all expenditures was $316.54. A mortgage payment is included in that figure. The family ate well on less than $75.00 per month.

Times were different in then. No cell phones, Blackberries, Kindles, computers, or television. Not knowing what I was missing when I reached the ripe old age of five, I chose to play soldiers, Tarzan, cowboys and Indians. After a hard morning in the yard I heard that sweet voice. “Lunch is ready, Bobby.” Without hesitation I yelled, “OK, Mom!” I crossed my fingers and headed for the kitchen with thoughts of angel food cake and a cold glass of milk dancing in my mind. But first a lettuce and mayonnaise sandwich on white bread. WOW! One treat after another. That’s how it always was with N.E.W.