

Preserve family memories



TIPSheet

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Journal clues

A couple of years ago, my younger brother asked if my mother was intelligent. She had passed away in 1984, when he was a mere 16. Although we knew she could defeat about anyone at chess, her journal contains more clues about her abilities and interests. These include her graduation from secondary education.

Earning a diploma from high school might be a mundane affair for many in the United States. For my mother, living in Europe during 1947, an intense written exam stood between her and graduation. This final test functioned as both a high school diploma and a university entrance exam, and compared to a U.S. education, would be comparable to completing an associate's degree.

In English, she had three hours to write "The Gift of the Magi." For natural sciences she chose biology and had to select from among three questions about heredity. In mathematics she had four hours to cover three questions:

1. Discussion of curves
2. $\int u^2 x dx = ?$
3. Reconstruction of a function.

Despite missing so much school during the war, and constantly traveling around the countryside looking for food and shelter, she still passed her exams well enough to attend a university.

We are so lucky to have a record of her Abitur experiences. May you be so fortunate!

Happy recording,

Heidi

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