

The Flower-Shop Squirrel

by Cammie Corlas Quinn

When I was about ten years old, I purchased a present for my mother with my allowance. It was the first present I ever bought her. It was a cheap gift, and there really wasn't much you could do with it, but she kept it all her life.

I found the gift at Nardi's Flower Shop on the square in my hometown. The Auburn square was a thriving place back in the '60s. The population was only 3,000, but back then it was more common to shop in town than to drive to the big stores in the city. There were no malls in nearby Springfield yet, anyhow, and no super-stores. Our super-stores were the shops on the square where we received super service from super people.

When I walked into Nardi's that day, I recall searching the store for an appropriate gift for my mom. The sales counter was in the rear of the store, along with the glass refrigerators of flowers. The main part of the store consisted of a couple aisles of big leafy plants and a variety of pots and garden-type gifts. Wall-sized windows faced the square, filling the store with light. The owners went to our church and their daughter was in my class in school. My aunt sometimes worked at the store. There weren't many places you could go in Auburn and not be at home.



I found the squirrel propped in one of the flower pots as a happy little decoration. I suppose it cost a quarter or certainly no more than fifty cents—the price of ten packs of sunflower seeds at Edwards' candy counter around the corner. No doubt, I was drawn to it because I've always loved animals. I figured my mom would love it, too, because I loved it.

I don't remember giving it to her. Memories are flighty things. I only remember buying it at Nardi's in the 1960s and then finding it again in 2009, peeking out the glass doors of my mom's DVD cabinet. For decades, she kept and treasured the little squirrel.

The old adage, "it's the thought that counts" rings true with this little gift. It has kept on giving...first to my mom as a gift, then as a reminder of my love to my mom all those years, then as a comfort to me after her death, and now as a testimony of the value of simple gifts.

As I behold the scruffy little, gray knick-knack, I can't help but think it has a twinkle in its eye.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38 NKJV)