



Make Mom Happy By Mail

By Andrea Firth



Trudy Triner and her mom Jackie

Photo provided

You've got mail!—that's what Jackie St. Onge wanted to find each day when she made the quarter mile trek down the rocky path from her house to her mailbox on a rural road in Yelville, AK. But she often found little more than junk mail. "It just makes me sad," Jackie told her daughter, long-time Lafayette resident Trudy Triner,

"We were very close, and we spoke often by phone.

Plus my sister lived nearby," explains Trudy. "It didn't really occur to me that she might be sad or lonely." So about two and half years ago, Trudy set out on a mission to keep her mom's mailbox stuffed and to make her daily walk more than just exercise.

To make it fun and easy, Trudy did not confine her correspondence to the traditional letter. In addition to beautiful art cards from the Lafayette Gallery and post-

cards from San Francisco, Trudy put a stamp on a host of different things at least four times a week. She sent the tickets stubs from movies she had seen, news articles that she had read, menus from restaurants where she had dined, and colorful papers inscribed with brief messages.

Trudy kept stamps and envelopes in her car and was constantly on the lookout for interesting things to send. On Sunday nights, Trudy would empty her purse and forward the odds and ends that she had collected throughout the week. "It represented the memorabilia of my life," explains Trudy, "and my mom loved it. She would call my sister and say—you are not going to believe what Trudy sent today."

Stuffing mom's mailbox brought happiness to both Trudy and her mom and enhanced an already strong mother-daughter relationship. When Jackie recently passed away, Trudy found her latest correspondence in the reading basket by Jackie's favorite chair and all of her earlier communiqués stored safely in a box nearby.

To share her experience and to inspire others to think of creative ways to make the seniors and other loved ones in their lives happy, Trudy created the website www.makemomhappyby-

mail.com. The website includes tips for ways to get started corresponding and creative ideas for what to send along. "Seniors have told me that getting mail is the high point of their day," states Trudy. She also notes that family members who are not that close have found their relationships have improved through regular correspondence. "It's like an ongoing conversation," explains Trudy.

"My mom always had a good outlook and a very positive attitude," notes Trudy. "She described her senior years as the happiest time of her life. She said she had everything she wanted." And everything included a surprise in the mailbox each day.