I don’t know how she did it. This past weekend I was reminiscing what all my mother did “above and beyond” to be my mother.

“Mothering with the extra touches,” I’m sure it still happens in many homes, but it seemed back then that it was just the way that families functioned.

For some reason, I recalled the sound of the old peddle pumping away on the Singer sewing machine in the kitchen, often late at night or even early into the morning. When the aroma of bacon beckoned me down the stairway from my comfort-snuggled bed, there would often be a brand new shirt hanging across the chair by the end of the kitchen table.

“Here,” she would say. “Try this on. If it fits you can wear it to school today.”

In fact, I don’t recall many shirts that were actually purchased before junior high school.

It was a foregone conclusion at our house that everyone had a good solid breakfast to send them off to a day of work and school. When everyone was finally gone, it would be time to pull out the Maytag ringer washing machine to churn clothes through the rollers by hand until they were ready to hang on to a clothes line, especially on Mondays.

By that time, my dad would arrive home from the factory at 11:40 a.m. for a home-cooked lunch. When I got off the bus at 3:30 p.m. and raced into the house, there would be fresh-made chocolate pinwheel cookies and a glass of milk on the table, followed by supper at 5:15 p.m., when my father came home from work.

Dishes were washed in dishpans after water was heated on a kindling stove. We didn’t have running water in our house at the time. Drinking water was secured by carrying two buckets to the neighbor’s well to fill and bring home for consuming.

In the evening, time was spent doing homework, reading and bedtime stories.

How did she do it? Day in and day out, routines were varied between working in the garden, canning and freezing vegetables, cleaning the house, attending a Bible study and occasionally visiting a neighbor or preparing a dish of food or pie to share with a needy family.

Sleep would be scarce, at best, so it seemed, especially when I suffered serious bouts of tonsillitis. I can still recall the comforting figure of my mother sitting by my side in the night and dampening my fevered brow with wet clothes and praying for my recovery.

Of course, there would be the little extras like planting flowers around the house, sweeping the walks, hosting quilt bees and occasional projects such as wallpapering rooms, painting trim around the house or assisting my father would various projects.

In the end, she made a supreme sacrifice and worked on a cement floor in a mill room for 15 years to be able to help assist with education. This was a shared project in our family, so that her son could prepare to become a minister. She ruined her knees in so doing and I could hardly hold the tears back in older age when I realized that her being in a wheel chair was at least in part a gift toward her belief in service and ministry.

How did she do it? She focused away from herself, always directed her energies toward others and the love of her family, and in so doing, lived out the words of Proverbs 31:27-31, “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

“Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her, many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.”