

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Mothering Memories

By Kathryn Wishlow

The month of May always brings memories flooding back of the variations of “mothering” I have either observed or experienced. Hopefully, my sharing will trigger a few wonderful or poignant ones ... or both for you.

Currently, I am able to peer out my laundry room window and watch the mother robin's diligent attempt to take care of her brood. She literally sat through freezing temperatures, snow flurries, very gusty winds, and many people coming and going through my back door to ensure the survival of her eggs. Now, she rarely gets to sit as her greedy young rise up squawking and open their beaks every time she comes anywhere near the nest. She looks weary.

I have many early memories of activities with my mother since my geologist father was often gone for weeks at a time. I am sure that from sheer loneliness and boredom, she taught me many things to occupy our hours together. We played card games like concentration, fish and war. In those days, I loved “war” because it went on and on ... and on. I sure do not feel that way now!

Mom loved to knit, and would bring home these long skeins of wool. I would have to stand there with the skein on and between my outstretched arms, while she was

winding the wool into a more manageable ball. We talked during those sessions. She would tell me stories about when she was my age. Like any child, I loved those intimate moments in time, even if my arms ached.

In grade two, friend of mine had no mother to make her Mother's Day project for. We were pushing our hands into paper plates of wet plaster to give as gifts. I suggested that she make it anyway for her father, who seemed to do all of the same things my mother did. My friend's confession really upset me. The very thought of *not* having a mother *did* make me appreciate mine a lot more, even when she was annoyed that I had not cleaned my room.

As a teenager, I remember my mother having my back when it came to issues related to my age. She helped soften my father's rigid bedtime rules, by reminding him I was no longer a child. It might take a while, but if I pleaded my case, reasoned with my mom and waited, I would later hear her discussing the issue with my father. They had this “mutual decision” rule that meant neither one could say “yes” or “no” alone to a request. It took longer, but eventually good compromises did happen. I learned the fine art of psychological manipulation!

Becoming a mother myself brought a lot more understanding of the “protective parent” label. From my perspective, good health and proper nutrition was my nurturing emphasis. Fairness and *really listening* to the observations and concerns of my children paid off. Lovingly explained restrictions brought far less rebellion from my teenagers. Mothering for me, meant trying to balance firmness and boundaries, with their growth and freedoms. A few of my friends were raised by grandparents. Their “mothering” styles seemed to be more relaxed. From them, I learned the meaning of “Don't sweat the small stuff!” well before I was a mother, and it sure comes in handy to remember now that I am a grandmother.

I certainly appreciate all of the cards and gifts I have received over the years on Mother's Day. I cherish the time and thoughts that went into them. I have even received Mother's Day cards from people I've had the ability to mentor, or nurture through difficult times. And I am truly forever grateful for anyone and everyone who ever “mothered” me!

(Kathryn Wishlow belongs to WhitePine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all aspects of writing and publishing. Follow them on FaceBook or www.whitepinewriters.ca)