

To Mom —A Tribute

Mom, from time to time you have asked, “Was I a good mom?” Well, the answer is yes. You weren’t a perfect mom—you made some mistakes and you’ve had your struggles—but you made up for them in many ways. Next time you ask that question, look back over this and read just a few of the things you did right.

I think the thing you did best was to love us—really love us. I remember you holding me a lot and feeling very safe—and your gentle words of affection and encouragement. I have always had the feeling that no matter what my choices were, you would stand behind me and love me unconditionally. That’s a rare and beautiful gift to give a child.

That unconditional love was demonstrated in so many ways. I remember every night before bed we would have a “chat.” (I wonder what people thought when I, as a first-grader, told them I had “chats” with my mother?) When I was sick, you would wrap me up in a quilt chair, give me 7up®, dote on me, and let me watch all the cartoons I wanted. And when I became critically ill as an adult, you helped nurse me back to health, even though you were working full time and tired.

The determination with which you have overcome your struggles and built your life back in recent years has been an inspiration to me.

Your spirit is beautiful, creative, free, and a bit eccentric. And you have passed much of that down to me (including the eccentric part!). You taught me to use my imagination and encouraged me to invent magical worlds and imaginary friends. You made me stop and listen to the silence (what bafflement to a child!) or listen to the wind blowing through the trees. We’d lie on our backs watching the clouds paint pictures in the sky, and take slow walks through the fall leaves. Being able to appreciate these things is something I still treasure today.

You always made holidays special. I remember magical Christmas Eves with no lights on but the Christmas tree and bayberry candles. We’d curl up on the couch watching that silly blue gas log burning in the fireplace, and soak in the tingling anticipation and warmth of the moment. And I remember you working late into the night making Halloween costumes—whatever we wanted to be that year—never store-bought. I always felt proud to wear what you made.

I also remember you making fascinating little people for me with felt and old wooden thread-spoons. It seems you were always doing something creative, resourceful and zany, often seeing situations from the point of view that no one else was looking at. You always said, “If you can’t change a situation, you can always change your attitude about it.” A principle I have seen you live by in recent years. This creative problem solving is another legacy you have passed down to me.

You put up with things that few mothers would, when it comes to pets. (However, thank you, by the way, for finally getting rid of Chucker the Labrador. The only two things I remember about him is that he threw up in the car—what an appropriate name “Chucker” was. And I also remember that he would pin me down and chew on me until someone heard me screaming for help.)

Thankfully, the vast majority of my pet experiences were much more positive than that. One Thanksgiving when I was five, you gave in to my pleading to bring home the stray Siamese at Grandma’s house, Beau, who turned out to be our faithful friend for so many years. In addition, you let us have mice, frogs, birds, turtles, fish, various caterpillars and bugs, and rabbits who would run amuck in the house, leaving little pellets everywhere and chewing on your electric cords—who knows what they did to your garden. Somehow, you insisted that all these creatures get along with one another. And they did.

Then there were extreme acts of courage and heroism such as the time my rabbit, Penrod, was attacked by a dog. In tears, I brought him to you with the hopeful trust of a child knowing Mom could do anything. He was unconscious, not breathing. You took one calm but concerned look and began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation! What mom would do that! And when that didn’t work, you said, “I just have a sense that we need to put him in warm water.” So you did. And he revived! An amazing example of your eccentric but wonderful creativity.

But that wasn’t all. Penrod’s injury caused an abscess and permanent nerve damage that kept his teeth from occluding properly. Many parents would have called it quits at that point. (Actually most parents would have called it quits at the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.) But you paid \$50 dollars to the vet and learned how to clip his teeth to keep them from growing into his skull. So every week or two, you would cut Penrod’s teeth with dog toenail clippers, causing pieces of rabbit tooth and blood to catapult through the kitchen like tiny missiles—a horrific task for everyone, including the rabbit. Did I say, “extreme acts of courage and heroism?” Maybe it was just the lengths you were willing to go because you loved us so much.

Perhaps most important of all, you gave me a deep sense of spirituality. You taught me to talk to God and know He was around me all the time, and you taught me that Jesus was His Son. It was the beginning of the faith that now gets me through every day.

More recently, I will always remember that magical weekend when you helped me decorate my home the way I wished I could make it look, but never could. As we worked together that weekend with a synergy that only God could produce, we created a new home and a renewed relationship between the two of us—both of which I will always treasure. And by what I can only explain as osmosis, I began to understand your gift and create for myself a little of what you do—another legacy you have given me.

So the next time you ask, “Was I a good mom?” . . . remember these things, and that the answer is Yes!

*With much love,
Cyndi*