



may inspiration...my mother / myself

This year, Mother's Day is particularly inspirational for me. I lost my mother recently and this will be my first Mother's Day without her. I find myself thinking a lot about her and so many memories have surfaced that I hadn't thought about for years.

The first memory I have of celebrating Mother's Day was when I was 5 or 6 years old. Our parish church had a Mother's Day ritual. Women wore pink carnations if their mothers were living and white carnations if they were deceased. There was a long table in the vestibule of the church covered with single pink and white carnation corsages pierced with large hat pins. Before walking down the aisle, every woman and girl picked up a flower from the table and the ladies from the church auxiliary helped to pin them your dress or lapel.

In my 5 year old mind, the whole scene made me feel a bit confused. I am sure that no one explained the concept thoroughly to me (this was the 50's after all) and the depth of my understanding was probably my own version spliced together from bits of conversations on the way to church. I remember having lots of questions but was unable to get answers until after the service.

What did carnations have to do with mothers? Would God punish me for being defiant and disobedient if I grabbed a white carnation instead of a pink one? If someone wore a white flower and their mother was alive, would their mother die? Who "said" that I had to wear pink or white? Didn't carnations come in green and blue too?

I remember sitting in church counting the pinks, then counting the whites, when I suddenly realized that I 'knew' if the womens' mothers were "dead or alive". The thought of knowing something so personal and intimate about complete strangers made me feel embarrassed and creepy. It was like knowing what color underwear they wore. To this day I have a mild aversion to carnations with their cloying scent of cloves and their short, stiff, ruffled, and clammy petals that are many times colors not found in nature.

Many Mother's Days later...

My mother was a wonderful seamstress and every year she sewed our Easter outfits. Easter outfits were a big deal, even bigger than the first day back to school. We always had a new outfit with all the fixings- gloves, hats, and shiny new shoes in either white or black patent leather. They were for Easter, but one year my Mother got a hold of three large bolts of canvas duck with a nautical toile pattern. One bolt was navy on white and the other two were red on white and light blue on white.

I fell in love with the navy printed fabric and begged my mother to make a sleeveless shift dress with a matching triangular scarf similar to the ones that I had seen Jackie Kennedy wear. I think I was 13 or 14 at the time and the thought of emulating someone as chic as Mrs. Kennedy was a dream come true. I felt grown up and sophisticated, especially since the style of dress was my own idea. I was at that tender age when I wanted to be apart from the crowd and have my own 'style' but at the same time not be too far out of range.

My mother sewed the dress- easy peasy. It was so easy that unbeknownst to me, she whipped up the same dress and scarf for my 4 younger sisters. I guess she forgot to mention it to me (or she was hoping I didn't notice).

That Mother's Day, we took a family trip to my grandmother's beach house on the New Jersey shore. I was very excited to wear my new nautical shift with the matching scarf, so I packed it in my suitcase to wear to church on Sunday. Sunday morning arrived, I got dressed for church and then I noticed that my sisters were all dressed in a smaller version but the same dress as mine! As you would expect, I had a TOTAL MELTDOWN. RIGHT THEN. RIGHT THERE.

I refused to wear the dress. I felt sick. I told everyone I wasn't going to church. My mother couldn't understand why I was so "upset" as my sisters' dresses had ruffles on the bottom of their hems, mine did not. Besides, they were in different colors, not navy blue like mine. Was she joking!?!

My Dad, who rarely got involved in our family's female squabbles, voiced his opinion loudly and told us all to "get in the car". He didn't want to hear another word about it. I was to take a swig of Pepto Bismol and "zip it". I WAS BEYOND DEVASTATED.

We all piled into our Buick station wagon and took off for church. If looks could kill, I would be the last surviving member of my family. We arrived at St Francis at the Sea church looking like the Trapp Family Singers arriving to accompany the guitarist at the 10:00 AM Guitar Mass. It was mortifying.

As soon as I stepped out of the car I bolted- my parents yelling after me. "Get back here! ". If I were a more rebellious child I would have run away- at least for the remainder of the day. It was only my fear of a mortal sin for deliberately skipping Mass that held me in check (what a goodie two shoes!).

Rebelliously, and feeling righteously indignant, I ran around to the side entrance and waited in the vestibule until I made sure that my family was sitting down. I then took my seat in another pew far far away, slinking down in the pew as far as possible without someone thinking I had fainted.

It never occurred to me since this was a resort parish, no one knew me. If I had taken a seat with the rest of my family I would have blended in as just another Trapp Family Singer. But sitting alone, in another part of the church, I must have looked like a shunned member of some bizarre, nautical, gypsy cult. It would be many years until I experienced such humiliation again.

I am surprised that I forgot that story. I ask myself, why? I cannot imagine why. It is a classic. Strangely enough, not only had I forgotten that dreaded day but, without meaning to, I evidently put my own children through similar embarrassments as my parents had put me through. A few weeks ago, I noticed a paragraph that one of my son's wrote in school. It has been pinned up on my inspiration board in my office for years. It has been there for so long that it has become like wallpaper. It says,



Parents do many embarrassing things and no matter how much you tell them to STOP!, they do not. One thing I will try not to do is tell their friend's personal things like doctor's appointments and I will not start yelling their schedule out of the car window in front of all their friends. I would never come to pick them up and yell out the window that I am here. I would not make my kids wear certain clothes like jeans and a fancy sweater to a baseball game and not shorts and stuff like that all the time unless it is necessary.

When parents try not to embarrass kids, they cannot help it especially moms!

By Blair deBart, Class III

There are many morals to this story, but the one that I would like to walk away with is this. No matter how much you think you are different than your parents, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

To all you Mom's out there, whether you are thinking pink or white,

Happy Mother's Day!

President

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