



## may inspiration...bad mommy

Some years ago I served on the Property Council for a National Trust Historic Site. When we needed to fill the Director position, I was asked to join the Search Committee. It was an interesting and sometimes overwhelming task sorting through stacks of resumes and bios trying to put the many qualified applicants in some kind of order, weighing experience against education, and age against unbridled enthusiasm. It was very eye opening but certainly not easy. After a while, a lot of the resumes started to sound the same. However, there was one particular bio that still stands out in my mind some 10 years later.

The applicant was a woman. She was the director of a local Historical Society in a small CT town. Her background and experience didn't quite meet the qualifications we were looking for, but her winsome personality and pluckiness was memorable. Her resume made us stop and notice her. Well done. After listing all the stuff a good resume does, she concluded it by saying, "I am a single mother and have raised three boys. I taught them to respect women, to clean and load a rifle, and to sew buttons on their own shirts". Boy, I was impressed!

My boys were then in middle school, and by that time, even if they had the eye/ hand coordination to thread a needle, they had baseball gloves on 24/7 and little or no interest to sit down and learn sewing skills. As far as cleaning and loading a gun, I didn't know my way around that. Respecting women, the most important lesson of all, probably meant that her sons noticed and understood how hard she worked at just being their Mom. I couldn't help to wonder, would I have passed muster? *I was a little bit jealous.*

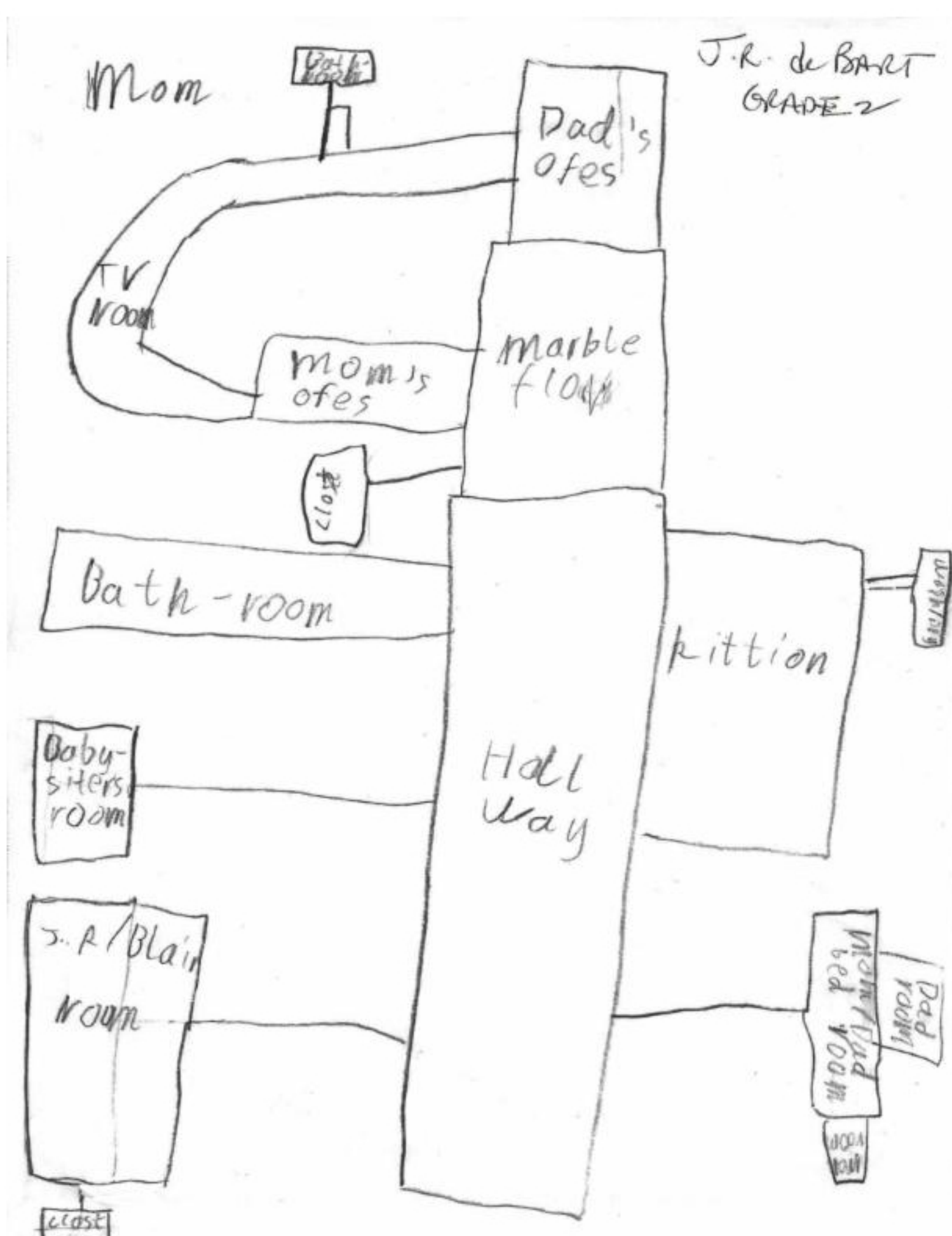
When I think about mothering, it's hard for me not to think about all the mistakes I've made along the way. I know I have done a lot of things right too, but it's those Bad Mommy moments that haunt me. Looking back, I was probably *too strict, too impatient, too stressed out*. Did it really matter that my three year old threw a tantrum every time we went into our favorite toy store? Would my sons be spoiled losers today if I had given them more than one ride on Dino Dinosaur in front of our local pharmacy?

If this is true confessions, I cannot skip the time I left my son with the doorman in the lobby of our building while I ran to the garage to pick up the car and drive him to summer camp. On the way, distracted by some "design snafu" of the moment, I somehow changed gears to *auto pilot* and walked right past my garage and ran to the gym instead. While I checked in, changed, and stretched, I couldn't shake the sense that I was *forgetting something*. In the middle of a push up, I realized that ***I had*** forgotten something; ***my first grader was waiting for me in our lobby. OMG!*** I freaked out and feeling like the worst mommy in history, I ran back to the apartment building practically hyperventilating with anguish and guilt. My son, of course was being entertained by our door man, but when I burst into the lobby totally out of breath, he said (in a very little voice)," Mommy what took you so long?" I then had to pile on more guilt (as if that was even possible) and tell a little white lie. "The guys in the garage took soooooo long to bring up the car, Honey!" A truly Bad Mommy moment.

*There were other equally crazy moments*

When my oldest son was in the 2nd grade, they were given an assignment to draw a floor plan of their apartment. (What the heck kind of assignment is that to give a 6 year old?) I tried to explain to him how floor plans look - how each room connects with the other. "Imagine you are a bird flying above the ceiling", I said. He had absolutely no interest in what I had to say. Totally ignoring me, and continuing to "draw away", he said that Miss Toomey, his assistant teacher, showed him how. Then the tug of war began. When I tried to correct his "mistakes", he totally ignored me. Finally, hurt and exasperated, I shrieked, "***But this is what I do!!!, Miss Toomey is an assistant teacher. I am a designer!***"

WOW...I must have had a bad day with some real authority issues. What was that about? I remember my son looking at me as if I was crazy, and then, almost as if he understood that I just had a bad day, he let me explain it again... "Imagine you are a bird flying above the ceiling"...



We had our morning routine. I wasn't available for pickups in the afternoons, but I did drop the boys to school in the mornings. I would walk 5 blocks to our garage (hopefully bypassing my gym), pick up the car and pull up in front of our building. The doorman would then buzz up to the apartment to let them know I was waiting outside. Boy #2 would arrive in approx. 2 minutes, but Boy #1 (our Pokey Puppy) would often take another 10 minutes to appear. By the time we were all in the car, we were not only late, but I would be stressed to the max. Running just 5 minutes behind meant that there was a strong chance we would get behind a giant NYC Sanitation Department hydraulic truck. If and when that happened, like the words "*Niagara Falls*", my eyes would roll back in my head and I would turn into Psycho Mommy right before their eyes.

If you have ever been stuck behind a NYC Sanitation Department vehicle, you know there is nothing you can do or say to hurry them along. They take their good old time, totally immune to the honking, yelling and swearing that is going on behind them. There is nothing you can do except hope that it is a less smelly recycle day so you and the kids can sit and watch them crush car doors and bed frames along with bags of plastic bottles. Cool. Along our regular route was the West 81nd St Police Department. At that location and on a highly stressful morning, we were stuck behind a truck that was even slower than usual. Frustration mounting, I remember getting out of the car to have it out with the sanitation dept guy who, decked out in sunglasses and a Mets cap (wrong team) , had been watching me with a smirk for the last 10 minutes .

"Listen, I said, raising my voice to be heard over the hydraulic screeching, "Can't you hurry it up? My son has a test this AM and he is going to be late".

At that point, like magic, a policeman appeared from between 2 parked police cars. He walked over to me and said in a rather gruff voice, "*Madam, take a seat.*" ... but officer, I whined, ... "***Madam, take a seat!***"

He then ushered me back to our car and opened the driver's door. By that time, a small crowd had gathered. I could see what they were thinking. *Policemen protecting sanitation worker from out of control Mom*. So apparently were my sons. "So where's your kids?" he asked. I turned around and realized that both of them were so mortified that they and their back packs were hiding on the floor in the back seat of the car. BAD MOMMY.

There are many other Bad Mommy moments you can be sure, but when I think of them, these are the moments that jump out. When you are a parent, it's sometimes hard to take credit for the good moments without the bad moments popping up to break your bubble. Hey listen, we mommies aren't perfect, that's for sure, but we really want to do a good job and it isn't always easy. For some reason, the nightly tubbies, story time, hugs and kisses on the on foreheads, the talks about being kind and doing the right thing, are taken for granted. We parents don't get any extra stars for those. Besides, we all know that care givers, teachers, coaches and the luck of the draw play a large part in how our children reach adulthood. That said, and I speak for all of us, we do the best we can!

If I was writing my bio today, I might just end it with a bang and impress its readers with my winsome personality and pluckiness by not forgetting to take credit for my mothering, too. Raising my sons is my *greatest* achievement, bar none, and I mean that from the bottom of my heart.

I think it would go something like this:

*"I am a working mother. I raised two sons who are outstanding gentlemen. They respect women, appreciate their mother's sense of humor, and have grown up never using paper napkins. For that, I am enormously proud!"*

MOMMIES EVERYWHERE, TAKE A BOW!

Happy Mother's Day!

*Debra*

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