**THE MEANEST MOTHER IN THE WORLD**

As I write this early in the morning my heart is heavy. I received a text from my sister at 4:30 a.m. telling me that my mother had fallen and couldn’t get up. An ambulance arrived and got her to the hospital. She is to have surgery to fix a fractured hip. I love my mom and wish I could be there, but due to this Covid it is difficult to see her. So I’m just praying and anxiously waiting on word to tell me how she is doing.

My thoughts wandered backward in time to when I was a boy at home. My mom loved to read books and newspaper articles by Erma Bombeck. Ms. Bombeck was so witty. Her writings always made you smile, often made you laugh hysterically, and always hit home with a nugget of wisdom on how to make your marriage better and love your children more. Some of her books I still see around the house when I’m home are titles like:
*If Life Is A Bowl Of Cherries – Then What Am I Doing In The Pits*?
*The Grass Is Always Greener Over The Septic Tank
When You Look Like Your Passport Photo – It’s Time To Go Home!
I Lost Everything In The Post-Natal Depression
Family: The Tie That Binds… and Gags!
Aunt Erma’s Cope Book: How To Get From Monday to Friday in 12 Days*

But it’s in her book *Motherhood: The Second Oldest Profession* that I wish to give you a bit of Erma’s wisdom and wit because it is an article I have felt about my mom for 50 years. It goes like this…

    I had the meanest mother in the world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs and toast. When others had cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my supper was different than the other kids also. But at least I was not alone in my suffering. My sister and two brothers had the same mean mother I did.

    My mother insisted upon knowing where we were all the time. You'd think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing. She insisted, if we said we'd be gone an hour, that we be gone an hour or less, not one hour and one minute. I am almost ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us. Not once, but each time we did as we pleased. Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed? Now you can begin to see how mean she really was.

    The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up early the next morning. We could not sleep until noon like our friends. So while they slept my mother actually had the nerve to break the child labor law. She made us work. We had to wash dishes, make the beds, and learn to cook and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she laid awake nights thinking up mean things to do to us.

    She always insisted upon our telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth even if it nearly killed us -- and it nearly did. By the time we were teenagers, she was much worse and wiser and our lives became even more unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us to no end by making our dates and friends come to the door and get us. I forgot to mention: while my friends were dating at the mature age of 12 or 13, my old fashioned mother refused to let me date until the age of 15 and 16. Fifteen, that is, if you date only to go to a school function and that was maybe twice a year.

    My mother was a complete failure as a mother. None of us have ever been arrested or beaten his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You are right, our mean mother.

    Look at all the things we missed. We never go to march in a protest parade, or to take part in a riot, burn our draft card and a million and one things that our friends did. She forced us to grow us into God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

    Using this as a background I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller and I am filled with pride when my children call me mean. Because you see, I thank God he gave me the MEANEST MOTHER IN THE WORLD.

***--by Erma Bombeck***

I only wish all kids these days could have such a mean mom, for then the world would be such a more lovely place to be.

I love you mom. – Richard Earl