



The Westbrook Chatterbox

Memories of Mom

Most of us here only have memories of our mom to comfort us. I lost my mom eight and a half years ago and I still miss her every day. So since May is Mother's Day month, I hope you will allow me to reminisce about my mom. Maybe it will bring back memories of your mom as well. As you read through my memories, think about your mom. What fond memories do you have?

My mom grew up in a very small town and moved to Kansas City when she was 17. She met my dad in June of 1964. Their first date was at the drive in and it was raining. It wasn't the best first date but apparently it was the start of something beautiful. My parents married on October 11, 1964.

Mom became the step mom to two little boys ages 3 and 5. They only visited on the weekends. That is until January 1967. The boys came to live with Mom and Dad. I was born April 3, 1967. So Mom went from no kids to three kids in three months – one with a bad case of colic. My younger brother was born four years later.

My mom was amazing. She was a strong Christian and made sure that we were in church every week, even when my dad didn't go. She prayed for us each and every day. She even prayed for our future spouses. She lived her faith out each and every day. Her walk was instrumental in my dad eventually getting back into church.

Growing up, Mom stayed home with us. When we were in school and I needed braces, she went to work for a short period of time to help pay for them. We would get home from school and Mom would be there with a snack and a ready ear to listen about our day.

Mom didn't take any lip off of us or allow us to get away with shenanigans. She learned what punishment worked best with each of us. Losing my phone and TV privileges was most effective with me. She made sure we did our homework before turning on the TV and she expected us to get our chores done without reminding. If she had to remind us, it cost us part of our allowance.

Mom always, always made birthdays and holidays special. We were allowed to choose our birthday meal every year. We could pick whatever we wanted her to make and she would do it. I remember one year my birthday fell on Easter. I was bummed because we always had ham, scalloped potatoes, green beans and rolls for Easter. So I didn't pick a meal. But mom knew what I wanted and along with all the normal Easter meal – there was a pan of manicotti. (It was what I ordered every year!) My family still allows the birthday person to pick their meal. But now we all chip in on making it.

The teenage years were rough. I was not the easiest to raise. I was stubborn, opinionated, and very verbal. I did get in trouble a lot for my mouth, but we all survived. No matter how mouthy I got or what stupid thing I did, Mom was always my biggest cheerleader.

As I entered adulthood, my mother became one of my best friends. We talked multiple times a day. She would call and if she got my answering machine, she would say, "Hi, Janelle. It's Mom", like I wouldn't know who it was. But let me tell you, I would give anything to hear those words again.

Mom accepted my younger brother's and my spouse as if they were her own children. She loved them unconditionally. Becca and Jerome both referred to her as Mom and still do when we reminisce.

Mom was a speaker for Christian Women's Club for years. She would share her faith with anyone who asked. She was never aggressive with it but she shared how her life was changed by her faith in Christ. She was the fourth grade girls' Sunday school teacher for over two decades. She taught VBS and led women's Bible studies.

When Mom was dying with cancer, she was still ministering to others. No matter how bad she felt, she would reach out to her friends (which were many) if she heard they were sick. She was in Valley Manor towards the end and they loved her there. She had to go to the hospital for a while and they said the whole mood of the facility changed without her. She visited others in the facility and tried to brighten their day. She was such an inspiration.

This doesn't even begin to cover all my memories or completely convey who Mom was but it gives you an idea. She helped shape me to be who I am today. My greatest hope is that I can live up to her example. I want to make a positive difference in the lives of those around me.

Until Next Month - Janelle



MEMORIAL DAY

REMEMBER & HONOR

Memorial Day should be observed:

- by visiting cemeteries and placing flags or flowers on the graves of our fallen heroes.
- by visiting memorials.
- by flying the US Flag at half-staff until noon.
- by flying the 'POW/MIA Flag' as well (Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act).
- by participating in a "National Moment of Remembrance": at 3 p.m. to pause and think upon the true meaning of the day, and for Taps to be played.
- by renewing a pledge to aid the widows, widowers, and orphans of our fallen dead, and to aid the disabled veterans.

Land of the Free because of the Brave!!

Memorial Day Essay

by Kathlena Peebles [Copyright, 1996] a junior in High School at the time she wrote the essay.

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day set aside for remembrance of those who have died in our nation's service. Memorial Day was first proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan, in his General order number 11, and was first observed on May 30, 1868; when flowers were placed on the graves of Union and Confederate soldiers. The South, at first, refused to acknowledge, Memorial Day, honoring their dead on separate days until after WWI. It is now observed in almost every state of the union on the last Monday of every May. Since the Civil War more than 1.1 million veterans, both women and men, have lost their lives in service to America. Indeed the Civil War alone accounted for more than 600,00 dead.

On Memorial Day I had the opportunity to witness a memorial in San Francisco, aboard a submarine, the USS Pampanito, a submarine that was used in WWII and Korea. The United States submarine service suffered the highest percentage of casualties than any other of the services that served in WWII. They also sank over 55% of all Japanese shipping sunk in WWII. This was all pointed out to me with pride by several of these veterans.

As our National Anthem was played over the speaker system some of them started to cry as they remembered all of their fallen comrades, the ones that served with them, and the ones that did not. I thought about how many of these veterans brothers had made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may all enjoy the freedom this country offers.

As we stood for the Pledge of Allegiance I saw the reaction on their faces, it was a thoughtful, respectful look, a look of such sadness. I thought about what my dad's submarine veterans group was really all about "To perpetuate the memory of our shipmates who gave their lives while serving in the United State Naval Submarines" I then started to cry myself with the realization of what that really meant. All those old sailors, my dad included, standing on the deck of an old submarine holding the flag with such pride and sadness.

Then it was time for the speakers to give their speeches about their experiences and the meaning of Memorial Day. A WWII veteran talked about the hardships and struggles and the fact that he was lucky to be alive when so many of his brothers had fallen victim to the war. One talked about how it was up to the veterans to teach "our children about the sacrifices made by so many". Another said, "that America will only be the land of the free so long as it is the home of the Brave". So many of the speakers spoke with so much pride about America that it was hard not to think about all the people who have no idea what this holiday is really about. While they go to their Bar B Q's and beaches there are some who keep up a tradition of pride in service to the United States of America and remember all those who had fallen, and rejoice in the ones who still live and remember. Let none of us ever forget what Memorial Day really is.



Of all the special
joys in life,
The big ones
and the small,
A mother's love
and tenderness
Is the greatest
of them all.

Everything Mom

How did you find the energy, Mom
To do all the things you did,
To be teacher, nurse and counselor
To me, when I was a kid.

How did you do it all, Mom,
Be a chauffeur, cook and friend,
Yet find time to be a playmate,
I just can't comprehend.

I see now it was love, Mom
That made you come whenever I'd call,
Your inexhaustible love, Mom
And I thank you for it all.

So Blessed by You, Mom

A mother who always cares,
A mother who's always there.
A mother who always prays,
A mother who always stays,
When things get rough,
When life gets tough,
When all is just too much to bear,
God's Word she shares.
God's light she shines.
So blessed God made this mother mine.

(Author Unknown)

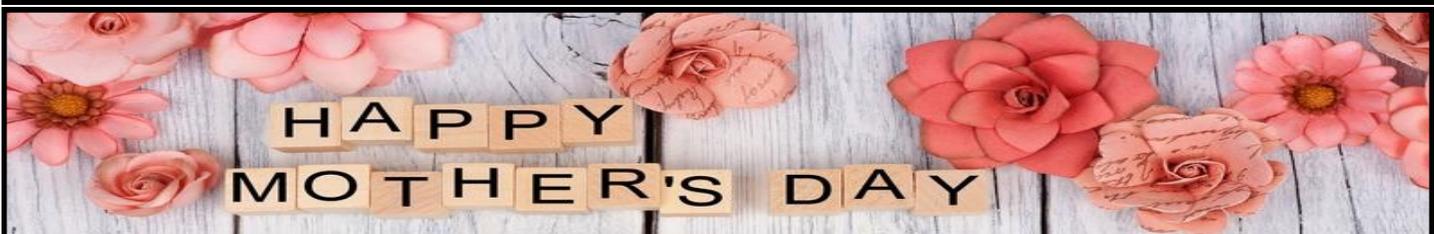
AND GRANDMA'S TOO...

"While we honor all our mothers with words of love and praise.
While we tell about their goodness and their kind and loving ways.
We should also think of Grandma, she's a mother too, you see....
For she mothered my dear mother as my mother mothers me."

The Magic of a Grandmother's Touch
There's magic in a grandmother's
touch. And sunshine in her smile.
There's love in everything she does
To make our lives worthwhile.
We can find both hope and courage
Just by looking in her eyes.
Her laughter is a source of joy,
Her words are warm and wise.
There is a kindness and compassion
To be found in her embrace,
And we see the light of heaven
Shining from a Grandmother's face.

Grandma's Hugs Are Made of Love

Everything my grandma does
Is something special made with love.
She takes time to add the extra touch
That says, "I love you very much."
She fixes hurts with a kiss and a smile
And tells good stories grandma-style.
It's warm and cozy on her lap
For secret telling or a nap.
And when I say my prayers at night
I ask God to bless and hold her tight.
Cause when it comes to giving hugs



A Tribute to Our Moms

"My mom always made herself available to serve and help me whether it was the middle of the night, when I wasn't feeling well or simply to assist with a project. She also instilled the importance of maintaining a moral compass — "Do good and be good!" was my daily advice. I am grateful to have a mom who was steadfast." Carol G for Nancy D

Sharon P aka Mom aka Grandma is one of the most gracious, self-less, kind, and caring human beings. She has many grandchildren and great grandchildren who describe her as loving and putting everyone else before herself. She continuously sends texts or calls just to see how everyone is doing. We are very lucky to have such a wonderful person to call Mom and Grandma! We love you Mom aka Grandma aka Sharon! Shannon H for Sharon P

Mom has always been dedicated to family and was very active in all of our activities; from being a room mother at school to PTA, Girl Scouts and baton. She always welcomed our friends for home cooked meals and yummy homemade desserts. Karen B for Marie F

Happy Mother's Day Mom! You are our role model in music, teaching, faith and love! You have shown us how to persevere and have a good time along the way! We love you dearly! Rika, Dan, Hans, Ryon, Sheila, and Jerry for Lois L

One of Mother's many endearing characteristics is her sensitivity to us having something special and nice to wear for important occasions. I remember her thoughtfulness to make me a new dress or outfit for an upcoming event, no matter how otherwise busy she was. She has carried on this kindness and generosity to grand- and even great-grandchildren! - Cheryl R for Joyce D

My mother, Nita VanBebber, has always shown me unconditional LOVE which is the best love a parent can give. She has always been AVAILABLE and PRESENT in our lives whenever we needed her. My mother has always been a HARD WORKER and modeled all her life what it is to have a strong work ethic. Her good SENSE OF HUMOR I think is my favorite quality because she is funny, positive and loves to laugh. I love her so much! Happy Mother's Day Mom!!!! Joyce G for Nita V

Our mom is the strongest, most kind and gentle woman we know. And her beautiful smile just lights up the room!! From her daughters for Janet R

I have too many memories to list in one or two sentences. But what I can say is she the most kind hearted, selfless person I know! As her daughter, I can only hope to follow in her footsteps. ❤️ Holly S for Sandy S

Marj Krenkel, we love you like no other- Always a great nurse, nana, and mother- from her family
❤️ ❤️ Happy Mother's Day Mom ❤️ ❤️

The characteristics I admire in my mother are: Strength. Widowed at 29 with four children between 4 and 11 years old, Mother didn't buckle. She kept our family together and made sure we were housed, clothed, fed, schooled and churched. Friendliness. Seems everyone who meets Edith likes her. This despite her being inherently shy and retiring. Stewardship. Mother has always been careful with her money. I learned a lot about managing money from her. Memories: I love that I have been able to take Mother many places she would never have gone on her own. I am proud to be Edith's daughter. Submitted With much LOVE for my Momma.

I was about four years old and mom was always busy cooking for hired help and family. One day she had just taken a cake out of the oven and it was cooling when the cat decided to help himself. Mom grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and tossed him out the door into the face of a salesman. Barb P for Mavis P

I will always remember my Mom, Jenifer Covington, reading her bible, praying, writing cards to others and giving gifts to neighbors. She taught me to serve and to love Jesus. April for Jenny C

My favorite memories with my mom are: When she read to me. We had a stack of books and I would always pick the same one. I get my love of reading from her. She was a great cook. At times cooking for a table of hired hands on the farm. Her fried chicken was the best!! She is a wonderful mother. Always putting others before herself. She is a lot like her mother, who was a great and loving grandma. Lori S for Marilyn W

Judith Graham (AKA Tootie Frootie Grandma Judy) My mom loves Jesus and reflects Him in her love for her family and countless others. She is Loving, Kind, Nurturing, Compassionate, Generous, Joyful & Beautiful within and outwardly. My family and I are incredibly blessed by

her legacy and wish her the happiest of Mother's Days! Love you always & forever Mama! 
Kenneth G for Judy G

I remember when I was young having a cat I loved so much that was hurt badly and we thought would die but while I was at school my mom took it to the vet. As this was an expense we didn't do, I was very thankful he lived and always remembered how she'd done this for me. Melissa A for Joyce D

My favorite memory with my mom is summers off from school. Mom would ride bikes with me, take me swimming, and we would go camping with my grandparents at Lake Viking. Mom is also an amazing baker and it was always fun to come home from school to see what amazing dessert she had made. My favorites are her chocolate chip cookies and coconut cream pie. I love you mom! Laura B for Pat C

I remember Mom cooking Saturday morning breakfast for all of us and always looked forward to her pancakes. On Sundays, we would have fried chicken cooked in a large cast iron skillet. It was soooooo good. I wish her a very happy Mother's Day and looked forward to celebrating her 90th birthday in September. Mike G for Edith F

I remember asking my mother (Joyce) what I should be when I grew up. I was probably about 6 years old. She told me that I could choose any career I desired. "You can be anything you put your mind to." That didn't help me much in making up my mind, but it taught me something about not limiting myself or others by what I currently think is possible. Dean D for Joyce D

Outstanding mothers are promoted to grandmothers but truly extraordinary ones become Great Grandmothers. Ours is all of the and more: love, grace and graciousness personified, she has taught us countless treasured lessons about life. A favorite passed down from her own mother: "When in doubt, do what's kind." A beloved boss of hers once wrote "God had a very good day when he made a little redhead name Florence. Her family could not agree more! Mom, Grandma and Great Grandma, we love you and are so proud you are ours. For Florence Y from her family

We Love Our Moms

Poems by Buster Bulen
aka Jack Covington

The Depth of Love
Dark and gloomy
Is a life of despair
Now sun shining on
Tangled mats of unkept hair

Dark and gloomy
It is out there
When there is no light
And nothing is fair

Dark and gloomy
Is someone's heart
When it desperately cries out
"I need a new start"

Dark and gloomy
Is someone's soul
When they put themselves down
And little do they know

It is a broken heart
That Christ loves the most
And when it changes
"Hallelujah" cry the Heavenly Host!

When the dark and gloomy
Give up their fight
Against an unfair world
And step into the light

Angels buzz around heaven
In bursts of happiness
Bursting through clouds
Knowing a life will be blessed

Till all days cease
With the gift of God's grace
The greatest thing offered
To this world's human race

So next time your down
Take that sorry old
Broken down frown
And think about the angels of heaven!

SWEET HOUR

Yellow is the storm sweeping bleak desert skies.
Red are the hearts weeping wasted lives.
Yellow terror is tearing faces.
White fear, grave gazes.
Yellow strains
Blue eyes
Into
Me.
I
See
Into
Blue skies,
Yellow streams,
White enlightening mazes,
Yellow glory with beauty blazes,
Red delights promise brightening skies.
Yellow forms the hope binding all human ties

Hope

Through this mist
and raging storm
I can see a harbor
safe, and warm

Through the crashing waves
a light house on the shore
but Lord
I can't row anymore

A cry out to the heavens
Release me!
I want to go home
home where I am free

Not a home
built by man
A house on the rock
instead of sinking sand

A light house
Built by the master
The place I long for
In this disaster

Featured Resident – Jack Covington

Jackie Ray “Jack” Covington was the third and final son born to Ira and Hazel Covington. His brothers were Ira James and William Wallace. He was born in Wynnewood, OK in his 2nd cousin’s doctor’s office, which was above his dad’s Texaco station. When he was two, the family moved to Grand Prairie, TX. His father was killed by a drunk driver in an auto accident when Jack was only five years old. He was present when his mother was informed. She explained to him what it meant and also shared more about salvation, which his father had previously shared with him. This event led to his salvation. His brothers as well grew and matured in their faith,

Jack’s mom went back to school and got her master’s degree in English. She taught third grade at the same school Jack attended. School was easy for Jack. He loved English but wasn’t a big fan of sciences. Jack loved sports. He played little league baseball and church softball. He started working at age 12 as an usher at the Uptown Theater. When he was 15 ½, he went to work as a commissary cook at the Red R Coffee Shop. In high school, he played football and competed in track and field. Jack graduated high school in 1967.

Jack grew up with Jenny Higgins. As a matter of fact, he jokes about them starting to sleep together 73 years ago. This stems from the fact that they shared a crib in their church nursery. They were good friends until the day they decided they could be more than friends. He was 17 and she was 16 when they started dating. They married three years later. Their families were not in favor of it, but his mother did sign for him because Jack was not 21.

The couple moved into a rented duplex in Grand Prairie. Jack got a job working as a lab technician at Mary Kay’s production company. He also attended college full-time at the University of North Texas at Denton (an hour away) working towards his pre-med degree. He received a bachelor degree in Science with a minor in English in 1973. He then started working on his Master’s degree. He graduated with a Masters in English and a minor in sciences in 1975. After his Master’s was done, he went back to school for an education certificate. He has many hours toward a doctorate.

Besides all of this, Jack and Jenny started their family. Their son, Christopher Ray, was born in 1972 and their daughter, April Dawn, was born in 1976. Jack credits Jenny for her raising such great kids because he was gone so much.

Jack started teaching high school science in the Arlington School District in 1975. He wanted to teach English, but there was not an opening. He was told if he taught science for a year they would then move him to teaching English. In 1980, he was one of three teachers that were selected to be involved with the CACTIP humanities project, which was finding better ways to teach English in college. He taught half a day at the high school and half the day at the University of Texas at Arlington. He eventually retired from high school and taught only at the University. He also taught online classes awhile for the University of Phoenix and later Mary-Hardin Baylor. He eventually went part time before retiring completely in 2021.

Church has always been an important part of Jack and Jenny’s life. They started out in the Methodist church and later switched to Baptist. First Baptist of Belton TX offered seminary courses. Jack and Jenny took somewhere between 30-40 hours of courses through there. They attended the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor for a three year program to become ministers for small churches. He became an ordained minister and she a commissioned minister. Jack’s specialty was working with first responders and Jenny’s working with the families of first responders.

The couple has traveled to Europe to visit their kids who were stationed overseas. They have also traveled a lot through the lower 48 states.

Jack’s hobbies include reading, online chess and games such as Farkle and Skipbo. He ran fifteen miles a day until about five years ago when his legs started giving out. He and Jenny continued to walk as well. They moved to Indiana to be near their son and his family in 2009. They spent spring and summer in Indiana and fall and winter in Texas.

The couple moved to Westbrook in October 2021 to be closer to their daughter. They had to move stuff from Texas and Indiana and then consolidate into their apartment. Jack loves getting to know all the residents. He enjoys the staff. He and Jenny pray for each staff member daily. He also likes the activities. He and Jenny are currently leading a Bible study for the residents called “O God! What a Character!” on the first and third Wednesday evenings at 6:00pm.

Jack’s dad was raised by his mom and step dad. They called him Buster. He thought his name was Buster Bulen until kindergarten when they called for Ira Thetis Covington. He didn’t raise his hand though. Because of this story, Jack uses Buster Bulen as a pen name. He has written several short stories and poems; some even have been published. Another family story – His Grandma Luna was the VFW National Mother of the Year because all six of her children served in the military during WWII. Not only that but Luna herself as well as all of her kid’s spouses served in support capacities.

Jack and Jenny have five grandchildren – Jeni, Grace, Bethany, Carter and Daniel and a son-in-law, Warren When asked for words of wisdom or a life lesson learned, Jack posed a question that he feels encompasses every area of life. “What else do you need to know, that you don’t already know, to be able to do what you need to do?”

Laughter helps you stay mentally healthy

Laughter makes you feel good. And this positive feeling remains with you even after the laughter subsides. Humor helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss.

More than just a respite from sadness and pain, laughter gives you the courage and strength to find new sources of meaning and hope. Even in the most difficult of times, a laugh—or even simply a smile—can go a long way toward making you feel better. And laughter really is contagious—just hearing laughter primes your brain and readies you to smile and join in the fun.

The link between laughter and mental health:

- **Laughter stops distressing emotions.** You can't feel anxious, angry, or sad when you're laughing.
- **Laughter helps you relax and recharge.** It reduces stress and increases energy, enabling you to stay focused and accomplish more.
- **Laughter shifts perspective,** allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and diffuse conflict.
- **Laughter draws you closer to others,** which can have a profound effect on all aspects of your mental and emotional health.

Laughter brings people together and strengthens relationships

There's a good reason why TV sitcoms use laugh tracks: laughter is contagious. You're many times more likely to laugh around other people than when you're alone. And the more laughter you bring into your own life, the happier you and those around you will feel.

Sharing humor is half the fun—in fact, most laughter doesn't come from hearing jokes, but rather simply from spending time with friends and family. And it's this social aspect that plays such an important role in the health benefits of laughter. You can't enjoy a laugh with other people unless you take the time to really engage with them. When you care about someone enough to switch off your phone and really connect face to face, you're engaging in a process that rebalances the nervous system and puts the brakes on defensive stress responses like "fight or flight." And if you share a laugh as well, you'll both feel happier, more positive, and more relaxed—even if you're unable to alter a stressful situation.

How laughing together can strengthen relationships

Shared laughter is one of the most effective tools for keeping relationships fresh and exciting. All emotional sharing builds strong and lasting relationship bonds, but sharing laughter also adds joy, vitality, and resilience. And humor is a powerful and effective way to heal resentments, disagreements, and hurts. Laughter unites people during difficult times.

Humor and playful communication strengthen our relationships by triggering positive feelings and fostering emotional connection. When we laugh with one another, a positive bond is created. This bond acts as a strong buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointment. Humor and laughter in relationships allows you to:

- **Be more spontaneous.** Humor gets you out of your head and away from your troubles.
- **Let go of defensiveness.** Laughter helps you forget resentments, judgments, criticisms, and doubts.
- **Release inhibitions.** Your fear of holding back is pushed aside.
- **Express your true feelings.** Deeply felt emotions are allowed to rise to the surface.
- Use humor to resolve disagreements and tension in your relationship

Laughter is an especially powerful tool for managing conflict and reducing tension when emotions are running high. Whether with romantic partners, friends and family, or co-workers, you can learn to use humor to smooth over disagreements, lower everyone's stress level, and communicate in a way that builds up your relationships rather than breaking them down.

Next Month: How to Bring More Laughter Into Your Life