
insights and encouragement from the “home front”

MEMOIRS OF A MOM

October 2008

Mom in the Middle—A Satisfying Place to Be

When people say that parenting is difficult, I think they often forget that there is a fun side. I never found diaper changes, scrapped knees or sagging algebra grades humorous. But somewhere along the way to raising our children, we thought long and hard about happiness.

When our daughter was about six months old, someone asked us why she smiled so much. My husband, without a pause, replied it was because we smiled at her so much. The years have passed and they are still smiling.

Recently we gathered to celebrate “Pappa’s” birthday. At 79 he is a robust man who walks and swims, follows college football and reads constantly. As the generation in the middle, I wanted to bring together the whole group for a true birthday celebration. This was no meek, store-bought cake kind of party. It started with decorations and ended with snips of ribbon and paper on the floor.

But it really started years ago when my children had an opportunity to know their grandparents. It was more than visits in the summer or holidays. It really took shape when my son moved to live with his grandparents and attend college. Retrospectively, he learned about the needs of a generation older and wiser. He learned that grandmothers needed to be driven to their 2 p.m. Thursday hair appointments and that prescription medication must be given on a routine schedule. He learned that everyone does not like sushi and that many people prefer a light dinner before an early bedtime. A few years later, our daughter followed suit. She, too, lived with her grandparents, providing an extra set of hands to care for her grandmother, whose health was failing. She learned about cooking chicken. Lots of chicken.

So it was no surprise that Pappa’s birthday would be a big deal. It hadn’t been celebrated in eons because of the failing health of his wife. There were far too many important things to think about than balloons, presents, cards and cupcakes. But with her passing, dynamics began to change and we get to spend much, much more time with Pappa.

So this year’s birthday was extra special. The dinner was planned, the house decorated. The “Happy Birthday” sign was 8 feet wide and 5 feet high. It was visible without corrective lenses. The table was covered with 79 assorted cupcakes. They were yellow, white and chocolate cakes. They had frosting to complement and there were various sprinkles, sugars and icings. The 79 cupcakes surrounded a full-sized cake frosted with tutti-frutti frosting and loaded with colored candles.

And I sat simply there, representing the middle generation, knowing the joy of family. It became totally apparent that the next generation could take on the leadership for family celebrations. And I was happy. I had done my job as “Mom” well. The proof is in the pudding ... well, actually the birthday cupcakes!

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