

## IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

# Motherhood: an emotional roller coaster

On the eve of Mother's Day, I often chuckle at comedian Joan Rivers' 1960's appearance on the "Tonight Show," with Johnny Carson, when she talked about the birth of her only child. She was lethal. She said when her labor pains really got rough and she was gripping the rails on her bed for dear life, the nurse leaned over her and snapped, "Well, do you still think blonds have more fun?"

She claimed that as she was being moved down the hall from the labor to birth room, she kept yelling, "I've changed my mind!!"

I've stewed for weeks about what to write for Mother's Day because being a mother is almost beyond description. It is the most thrilling, satisfying, fun, scary, responsible, heart-breaking, emotional role anyone can play. There are plenty of stories I'd like to tell about raising my three children, but they are still close by and two of them are writers. I have a feeling the book written by Joan Crawford's daughter called *Mother, Dearest* wouldn't hold a candle to what my daughters, who are now mothers, could produce at my expense. It's blackmail at its finest.

I'm the lucky one — to be in the middle of three generations of mothers. This Mother's Day I will be with my mother and father, ages 92 and 93 respectively. On my last birthday I was 65, and when I expressed to my mother my disbelief at reaching such an ancient age, she shot back with her usual birthday greeting, "Well, how to you think I feel?"

Every family has funny stories they like to repeat and we have ours. These stories have various versions, depending on who tells them. Once my three teen-agers and some of their friends were in the kitchen talking

and visiting when I heard a familiar tune on the radio. Smugly, I said to the kidlets, "I know who's singing that, it's the 'Working Boys.'" In the midst of their tears of laughter they told me the group's name was "Men at Work." Well, close, I said. Picky, picky, picky.

For Christmas one daughter asked for a music cassette by Def Lopard. (sp?) For the uninformed (old), it is a musical group. Being a nut about names, I wandered into the music shop, (which apparently sold drug paraphernalia but I wasn't smart enough to recognize it), looked the hippie person straight in the eye and asked for the tape by Blind Tiger. I thought I was awfully funny but I guess she was on her own stuff and just looked at me. I repeated the "Blind tiger" request a couple of times with no response, no sense of humor apparently, and I finally said, "OKAY, something by Def Lopard." Again I laughed at my own joke but she quickly got the tape and acted like she wanted me out of the store. She just didn't understand that one does not need drugs to act like an idiot.

My son proved to be an accurate pitcher, not with a baseball but with water balloons and tennis balls. One evening I was fixing supper and he was bouncing a tennis ball around the kitchen. I asked him to stop. He bounced it one more time — the ball headed for the oven door I was just closing, sneaked through the opening and slid down into the middle of the casserole I had just put in. I removed the casserole, took out the ball and put it back in the oven. The meal was just a bit fuzzier than usual. But what a good illustration of why NOT to bounce a ball in the house.

There are so many wonderful and hair-raising stories we can all tell about being

mothers. However, the mother instinct of protecting our children has taken leave of too many of us. Not protection by spoiling or coddling children and giving them everything they want, but protection by being parents who can be looked to for teaching us right and wrong. By being parents who demonstrate how to handle life's situations. And we are not protecting our children by defending them when they

do something wrong.

It's become a cliché, but there is nothing more precious and vulnerable in this world than our children. So I ask you, why are their care and well-being not top priorities in our private and public worlds?

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