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MOMS

For Mother's Day: a loving essay from one of our contributors . . . intimate thoughts from TV's favorite moms and the women who played a starring role in their lives—their own mothers!

By Barbara Carlin

 Like most daughters, there was a time when I considered my mother a big disappointment. Although she had a banana bread recipe that Betty Crocker might easily have killed for, when stacked up against the likes of June Cleaver and Margaret Anderson, she just didn't make it. For one thing, she wasn't always standing at the kitchen sink when I came home from school in the afternoon. She might more likely be found lying on the living-room sofa immersed in the latest best seller. And she didn't wear discreet strands of pearls and pale shirtwaist dresses or always speak in a reasonable tone of voice like the mothers on television. In fact, she had hats that you could see from a block away and a laugh that you could hear from a similar distance. She also had a habit of praising me to anyone who came within earshot that regularly made me want to disappear into the nearest piece of woodwork.  It wasn't until I grew up and shed my adolescent embarrassment about anything that deviated from my television-bred ideal of motherhood that I was able to see my mother for what she was: A woman of great style and vibrancy who had a well of loyalty as deep as the ocean floor.  That's one of the precious payoffs to being a daughter. As we get older, our mothers seem to get better and better. The lessons they sometimes had to drive home to us with brickbats suddenly make perfect sense. The advice that once seemed colossally and hopelessly outdated becomes recognizable as the wisdom we refused to see. And the person who might once have been looked upon as Life's chief roadblock—the adversary we were put on this Earth to overcome—stands revealed as none other than the friend and ally that, in truth, she always was.—*Bette-Jane Raphael*

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