

OFF THE BEATEN PATH Perfect mothers, imperfect moms

When my children were young, I didn't look forward to Mother's Day with a sense of anticipation. It's not that I didn't love and want each child. And the children presented gifts of the heart — homemade lumps of clay they fashioned into "candy dishes." Sometimes I received special art projects — drawings of the family, the mother with hair sticking in the air. Gifts wrapped in school notebook paper and taped shut with black electrical tape. One year — a special cake.

With ceremony, they handed me a layered cake. The words written on top with frosting said, "HAPPY MOTH." I looked puzzled.

"We ran out of room with the message," said a child.

"So, we had to bake another cake," said another child.

They presented me with the second cake. The rest of the message in frosting read: "ER'S DAY."

My challenge about Mother's Day — listening to accolades about Perfect Mothers.

You can always tell a Perfect Mother. They sew cute animal or swashbuckling pirate Halloween costumes. Imperfect Moms are at one with staplers and glue. Perfect Mothers never raise their voices and come to the breakfast table well-groomed and cheerful. Imperfect Moms holler, "What in the world are doing?"



Jean Ann Moultrie

"Shampooing the living room carpet," said an Imperfect Mom's child.

Perfect Mothers already have a spotless living

room carpet.

Imperfect Moms find a tot shampooing the carpet with a 3-pound can of shortening. Imperfect Moms lack child-raising skills. Or so I thought.

A friend commented that goals for mothering aren't sitting in a nearby box. "They are like stars, the ideals that we work for, we look for their light."

I think back to my childhood. I consider my mother a Perfect Mother. She fixed nutritious and tasty meals with the food ready on time. She kept our clothes washed and mended. She encouraged us in our homework. And she let us play in the mud.

One spring, the folks tilled up the area behind the back lawn for a garden. My brothers and I each received a small land allotment at one end. In time we determined that rocks constituted most of our garden area — even radishes wouldn't grow. Not to waste a perfectly good piece of property, my brothers and I developed the space into desirable kid real estate complete with lakes and canals. With a garden hose, we filled the water features and

floated boats. With our skills, it's amazing in future years we didn't major in hydrology.

My brothers and I found it satisfying to sit on the muddy bank, dangle our feet in our lake and squish mud between our toes.

Mother possessed the gift of imperturbability. She rarely got ruffled over our projects. However, after an afternoon of sloshing in muddy water and dike repairs, my brothers and I traipsed into the kitchen for a snack. Mom's voice carried surprisingly clear.

"Get back outside and hose off! You're dripping muddy water all over my freshly waxed floor."

Even Perfect Mothers have their challenges.

Many people look after children: grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, neighbors, teachers, foster and adoptive parents, etc. The humor aside, can there be anything more powerful, or needed, than a mother or mother figure providing kindness, love, and encouragement to children? Our heartfelt appreciation to each one.

Jean Ann Moultrie is a Grant County writer. A compromise on the subject of nutrition was reached when children agreed that carrot cake they bake is not considered one of the mealtime vegetables, and the author agreed not to sprinkle garbanzo bean sprouts on their pizza.

Greenhouse

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"The greenhouse is absolutely not a failure," Green insisted. "It did exactly what we intended it to do. I would do it again. I think we should do it again, probably with a private partner out of the gate this time, but we didn't have that luxury in 2017. Nobody was growing anything hydroponically in the valley four years ago."

Green added that the plan was always to take the greenhouse private or move to a co-op arrangement because the facility wasn't ever going to work with government labor.

"We knew that up front," he said. "What we didn't know was COVID. So we lost time having to adapt to a very dynamic marketplace with changing customer preferences and needs as a result of that pandemic. That happened to every enterprise."

The COVID-19 pandemic probably accelerated the timeline for moving the greenhouse to private ownership, according to Green, but he added that things happen for a reason.

"We probably would've kept growing had the pandemic not happened. At the end of the day we're not worse off for it," he said.

"It brought our timeline forward a bit, but having a private operator who is less constrained about what they can grow, where they can sell, who they employ and at what prices — I don't have much choice.

"WE PROBABLY WOULD'VE KEPT GROWING HAD THE PANDEMIC NOT HAPPENED. AT THE END OF THE DAY WE'RE NOT WORSE OFF FOR IT."

Nick Green, John Day city manager

I have to pay all government employees PERS and public benefits. They don't have that restriction."

Despite the monetary loss, Green said it would have been "highly unlikely" that the city would have gotten as much grant funding as it did for the wastewater treatment plant if the greenhouse had not been tied to the proposal. "What is the story without it? We're building a wastewater treatment plant, so give us money?"

Green added that he thinks the new owners of the greenhouse will be successful if the council approves the proposal to transfer operations.

"They've got a turnkey facility, the staff is ready to roll, they've got the seeds," he said. "We're going to partition the facility off into its own lot, lease the lot with the buildings and let them roll."

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