

Better cont. from pg. 5

surely would fail within a week or two. At one point there was discussion about the meaning of success. I made a fatal mistake of defining what success was. He quickly assured me that my definition would not get me very far in life, and I should be at the top of the class and that "B's" would not get me there, even if I tried my hardest. He was held to a very high standard by his parents, so he would not embarrass them in front of the rest of the small community. Later he held himself to a very high standard in college and during his post-graduate work at Yale. I was to be held to the same standard, if not an even higher one. He repeated the same line I had heard in third grade: "I'm not upset; I just know you can do better and do not want to see something like this again." Except this time, the end went on a little longer: "Now you know the standards to which your mother and I hold you."

The scene was over. I had survived my looming death. When my mother came home, she felt the tension in the house, saw the report card, and understood. After signing it, double checking to see I was okay and starting dinner, she headed upstairs to calm down my father. I can still hear bits of their conversation: "She should do better than that! She was not raised to be a "B" student! She will never make it with grades like that." Dinner that night was quiet. There was no mention of school or hearing the newly-learned facts of the day. We simply sat, ate and left the table.

Our relationship changed forever after that point. The damage had been done, and nothing could change it, not even the straight A's that followed. When we talk on

the phone now, the topic is still about school, but he does not mention grades. In his recent endeavors to learn Spanish, our conversations have become about the language and how to say certain words and phrases, but school talk is brief. To this day, I still don't know why his attitude changed so abruptly. My mother's "talk" with him is probably a large part of the change. The one thing I can attribute to Daddy is a more critical eye in everything I do. But even now, if a low grade of mine came across his desk, there would surely be an ensuing call to end with his famous last words: "I'm not upset, I just know you can do better."

Hospice cont. from pg. 5

death.

Sometimes we minded these visits more than others. There were entire hospice visits that I would not realize I went on because my mom would scoop up Heather and me from our beds, put us in the minivan, buckle us in and conduct the visit. When the visit was over, she would reverse the process and we would be none the wiser to our late night trip. There were other times that my sister and I would be fully, frustratingly awake. We would pass the time by playing travel board games like "I spy," or if the house was located near a busy road, we played "Cars," in which we would select a color and all the cars that passed that were that color were "ours." After this game ended, we would compare our good fortunes and laugh at all of the clunkers that we had accrued. However, what we were most invested in doing was watching the house. We would keep look out in different directions

and yell out, "Funeral home is here!" or "The Hearse has arrived!" and most excitedly, "The body bag is coming out!" which meant that Mom was soon to follow.

One particular visit stands out starkly in my mind. The large, white, stucco house stood tall in a ritzy neighborhood. It was the night before Thanksgiving, and we were en route to my grandparents' house. All three of us were anxious to be at our destination, and we were not particularly thrilled to have to conduct not just any hospice visit but a death visit on the way. To make matters worse, we had forgotten our toothbrushes. I remember that the funeral home was particularly slow in coming to the house that night, so much so that my mom came out to the car once or twice to update us on how things were going and allow us to ask, "Mooooooooooooom!! Can we go yet?" During one of these visits to the minivan, I informed my mother that I had to go to the bathroom immediately. Her response was "Molly, there's nothing I can do about it right now; just hold it for a little longer and you can pee when we stop to get toothbrushes." Being the impatient soul that I am, I decided that this solution simply was not going to do. My mother returned to the house, and much to the consternation of my older sister, I decided that the only logical solution to my little problem would be to pee in the Kleenex box that Mom kept in the van. I recall vividly my sister forcing me to step out of the van to do my business amongst the Kleenex, crouching on the curb in the dark, and hoping for once that the funeral home did not

arrive just yet.

Through the circumstances that were nothing spectacular in our eyes at the time, I learned many profound truths that normally do not come so early. I learned that death was nothing of the sort that my cartoons said it was. It was not ghoulish, creepy, or scary, and, most importantly, it was not taboo. Instead of learning these labels for death, I learned different ones: natural, okay, relief. I cannot help but imagine how difficult it must have been for my mother to leave us sitting in the van on the curb or to wake us from our peaceful slumber to rest fitfully in the van while she worked. Looking back on these experiences, I have learned that everything does not go according to plan; I doubt that my mother ever thought that she would be hauling her children to patients' homes. Although the situation was not ideal, we all worked with the situation, and our time as a hospice family turned out to be one of my better childhood memories. This situation demonstrated clearly to me that sometimes you just have to make do. I learned that life (and death) does not always go according to plan, and that I would be wise to roll with the punches and learn something from it.



Society cont. from pg. 1

lot of stereotypes about women in her essay, and they are not all just about what the woman's role is but also how she should act in that role. One thing that really did not sit well with me was when she says in her essay, "I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties." If we have to listen to the men come home and complain about their jobs and other things, then women should be able to complain about their daily job(s) and have their spouses listen. In today's world, women are speaking up more and more. Brady also writes, "I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life." I believe this request goes for both men and women, but if you are able to hold down a career or carry a heavy load, then you should be able to plan and keep up with your own social life. It is called personal responsibility, and people need to learn how to take care of themselves instead of depending on other people to do it for them. You would be amazed at how many people capable of taking care of themselves do not. Then, when something goes wrong, they blame somebody else instead of seeing clearly that it is their fault for not taking care of the task on their own.

Though Brady's essay makes a lot of good points about all the things women carry around on their shoulders, she also gives men something to think about. If a man were to read Brady's essay, he might get an idea that this Brady's ver-

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