



Reflections of a River Rat:

Mother's Day recalls carbuncles, Lawrence Welk debates and the Fearsome Fivesome

After years and years of analysis, I have figured out that it is best to take the high road. My low-road view is that Mother's Day this coming Sunday is an excuse



to sell greeting cards. My high-road view is that it is a time-honored traditional to thank and honor our mothers.

I'll take the high road, only because my own mother always swore during my teenage years that I was driving her to an early grave, and that if I succeeded, she would come back to haunt me.

I was a pain. If there had been a remedial course for dopy teens, I would have flunked that too.

In recognition of all mothers this coming weekend, but especially for **Eileen Regina Maxwell Holleran**, for 47 years a labor and delivery nurse at A. Barton Hepburn Hospital, wife of a phys ed teacher and high school

coach, mother of six, and the ultimate practitioner of patience, here are my memorable moments:

The TV Debate

She always won the debate over our grandmother's desire, during her months-long winter visits, to watch The Lawrence Welk Show on Saturday nights versus my father's preference for Hockey Night in Canada.

"Geez, Fran. Have a little patience. They play four quarters."

“Eileen, they’re periods and they only play three.”

Professional Always on Call

Marching into my hospital room after hernia surgery, she lifted the sheets to inspect the incision, drawing a shriek from a 13-year-old boy. There wasn’t even enough time to form a fig leaf with my hands.

“Mom, you can’t look down there.”

“Oh, yeah? I’m your mother. I washed those balls for the first five years of your life.”

The Kitchen Table Clinic



In the 1960s and ‘70s, Paul Spilman, Herbie Lake and I were fixtures in the pickup wiffleball games played with hardball bats.

It seemed like every month or so, a mom arrived to seek medical advice.

“Do you think he/she needs stitches?”

“Eileen, can you administer this shot for me?”

But Herbie Lake thought he had a surefire malpractice case the day my mother discovered a poultice on his shoulder blade. Seems Herbie's mother had soaked some bread in milk, then bandaged it over a carbuncle.

"I just want to look at it," she reassured him. "I won't hurt you."

She barely touched the skin boil, but Herbie screamed like a banshee (Irish spirit that wails over a graveyard). Herbie's carbuncle burst like a firework on the Fourth of July. He said he was afraid to come inside for months if she saw her car in the driveway.

Keeping the Night Watch

Arriving home at 1 a.m. after three beers at a local gravel pit, a 16-year-old was startled when his mom snapped on the light in the living room.

"Where have you been, mister?"

Verdict – You can wait until your 18th birthday to get your driver's license.

The Taskmaster

It didn't matter on a breezy summer day if you wanted to watch "The Price Is Right." It didn't matter if your buddy was walking down the abandoned railroad line behind your house. It didn't matter if he called you an old washerwoman, laughed uncontrollably, then told all the guys what a Suzie you seemed to be.

You still had to hang the laundry out to dry ... or face the wrath of mom.

Wise or Mean?

The Internet meme talked about mean moms who made their children come home before the streetlights came on, or started sentences such as, "I brought you into this world"

"Mom wasn't mean," my older sister **Mary Nora Holleran Klenovic** told me. "She was just strict and smart. She had 11 brothers and sisters so she had seen it all."

Fearsome Fivesome

My mom ruled our roost, but she was in a power-sharing agreement with her network of colleagues. During this era, moms looked out for each other's

children, and didn't hesitate to pick up the wall telephone if they spotted a friend's children acting out.



The Los Angeles Rams had a stout defensive line in the 1970s dubbed the Fearsome Foursome. The Fearsome Fivesome -- Shirley Moore, Caroline Haines, Pat Sargent, Janet Mallott and Eileen Holleran -- riffed off that nickname.

They dubbed themselves The Fearsome Fivesome. At least once a week after work, they would settle the issues of the world over a beer or a glass of wine at a kitchen table, then scurry home to get dinner on the table by 6. The lineup:

Janet Mallott was positioned in the main office at Morristown CS.

Shirley Moore sat watch at the school guidance office.

Caroline Haines served as babysitter and watched as we broke her children's toys, then moved to Hepburn as a nurse.

Pat Sargent, the life of most parties when she wasn't working as a dental hygienist, could have doubled as a cat burglar. She had carte-blanc to walk into our house, up the stairs to my bedroom, and hustle me off to my post at the golf course when I overslept. She never woke up anyone else.

I could never overlook my mother-in-law, **Barbara Durkin Dannemiller**, who tended four children under 5 years old, provided end-of-life care for two sick



Mary Holleran raised one husband and 3 children. Her current goal is to teach Wesley Edwards to say Grandma.

parents, played lifeguard at the neighborhood pool, and endured countless camping trips. She had the gift of patience.

But the grand prize for patience goes to the mother of our three children, **Mary Frances Dannemiller Holleran**, who somehow looked beyond my failure to show up for Easter Sunday dinner in the first year of our courtship. It was a long, pathetic tale involving the Cleveland Indians home opener, too many beers, a

towed car, and young newspaper colleagues who also flunked the remedial course for dopey teens.

The only part of the tale that is appropriate for a greeting card is the phrase Happy Mothers Day! Thanks to all the women and mothers in my life.

Jim Holleran, a Morristown native, is a retired teacher and registrar for the Rochester City School District, and former sports editor of the Democrat and Chronicle. Reach him at jimholleran29@gmail.com or view past columns under "Reflections of River Rat" at <https://hollerangetsitwrite.com/blog/>