



## Happy Birthday Mom!

Sunny and no wind. That's a real change for us prairie dwellers this spring, as well as those living in the South where the weather continues to stay stuck in the category called "bad."

I am glad today is sunny and clear. It's a great way to celebrate what would have been my mother's 83rd birthday. I can watch birds congregate to dig up a few worms, and imagine my mother smiling at the simple pleasures of robins nesting and doves cooing.

My mother would also have laughed just last week at the pair of mallards that seemed confused by the fact they could nearly swim in my neighbor's back yard as rain created huge puddles on the grass.

Mom loved the outdoors, but even she might have gotten a little testy about this spring's weather. By now she would have planted most seeds, would be trying to keep alive any plants slated for outdoor planting, and would be drooling over the thought of her first rhubarb dessert.

Today's sun and no wind meant I could sit outside for the very first time with a cup of coffee in my hand and soak it up. That's when the tears came.

Last weekend I spoke to an amazing group of women in Aberdeen. Flamingos were everywhere as we celebrated finding the gifts of our mother's life--the values that make our journey great. They had flamingos on stage, on tables and even in the rest rooms! It was a wonderful event and I was honored to help them find their own pink flamingos.



My tears surprised me this morning. Tears seem to appear out of nowhere on days like Mom's birthday and Mother's Day, which is just five days away. But my tears in the garden this morning were also about the simple fact that while I love helping people find the gifts of the one who gave

them life, I still miss this woman who gave me life. And despite the joy of a new book that celebrates the gifts of a mom, today my mom would be 83, and she's not here to celebrate.

Healing is a journey that never really ends. How can it when the one you've lost is the one who gave you life? Maybe that's how it's supposed to be....the relationship is just that important.

What helps us heal from losing our mom?

For me, it has been the journey of finding the gifts of my mother's life, symbolized by those goofy looking plastic pink flamingos I now love so dearly.

I see the vibrant, bold pink of a flamingo in my yard and I instantly see my mom as a younger mother who added flamingos to her front yard to enhance a farm yard and add accent color in front of an aqua-colored house.

I hear the voice of a mom whose words shaped my beliefs as they created my values. I see the hands of a mom work hard in her garden, digging, planting, harvesting, cooking and thrilling us with the taste of the first Rhubarb Torte of the spring.

And I see those plastic birds, an audacious pink combined with aqua blue, and I know that the two colors on my book cover have become a color combination that soothes my soul in some very deep place.

Wiping away my tears, I decided this is a day to celebrate mom's gifts another way as well. My daughter, Jess, sent a peony in the mail for my Mother's Day gift. It's the perfect plant to celebrate having a mom, being a mom, and receiving gifts from a daughter whose creativity always reminds me of mom.

So this Mother's Day, whether you smile at your mom in person or look up above, I hope you take the journey the women in Aberdeen took with me Saturday.

Find your own pink flamingos....the values your mom gave you while you were a bit too busy to realize the lessons you were being taught.

Then say "thanks Mom!" And share those values with your grandkids on a picnic. Who knows? You may be as blessed as I was to hear your granddaughter someday say, "Gumma, I just LOVE your pink flamingos!"

Happy Mother's Day! And Happy Birthday Mom!

My best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dee Dee". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the text "My best,".

Dee Dee

*Dee Dee Raap is the author of **Dear Mom: Remembering, Celebrating, Healing and Find Your Pink Flamingos**. All rights reserved. To sign up for Dee Dee's free e-letters, go to [www.DeDeeRaap.com](http://www.DeDeeRaap.com).*