



Me, too, Mom!

I'm the sort of person who tries Netflix not for current movies, but for the old ones I've always wanted to see. One of my goals is to watch Katherine Hepburn's early movies. I love her as an actress, and I also enjoyed her colorful writing style, which she shared in her autobiography, "Me."

Shortly after she wrote her autobiography, Snoopy from the Peanuts comic strip was on top of his dog house writing his autobiography. The title for Snoopy's? "Me, too."

I call it the "Me, too," factor. When we see something really good, we are naturally inclined and inspired to replicate it in our own lives.

That's why it can hurt so much to lose your mom. We grow up wanting to be like her. We want to wear her lipstick, her necklaces and bracelets. We grow up wanting to cook her special food and bake her favorite cookies. We even want to make her favorite preserves and pickles. And that's where we get into trouble, if "we" is "me."

I did something this week I've never done before. I made Mom's Bread and Butter Pickles by hand. I have shared in many presentations how Mom made gallons of those pickles by hand because there were no food processors in those days—just an old butcher knife, sharpened by hand, used to cut hundreds of cucumbers into thin slices.

I've used my food processor in the past, but got so many goofy-looking slices that I decided when my garden surprised me with several gallons of cucumbers, they deserved the justice of being sliced by hand so they would be beautiful, just like Mom's.

As I sliced, I actually relaxed. I thought of Mom, growing, picking, slicing, preparing the food that fed a family on the prairie. I stayed in the present moment, didn't let my mind wander to all the things on my "To do" list, focused instead on my "To Be" list. I sliced, over and over, those beautiful cucumbers that grew in my garden, and I gave thanks for the harvest, for the quality of food that I take for granted, in fact, expect to be able to produce for my own family, just like Mom did for hers.

The irony of this little adventure is that as a kid I didn't even like Bread and Butter Pickles. I had no appreciation for the many jars that sat on the wooden shelves in the basement. I preferred the jars of canned cherries, canned crab apples—complete with stem—as well as all the jars sealed with wax to preserve chokecherry and plum jam.

My love for Bread and Butter Pickles is an acquired taste, now the perfect topping on Grandma Betty's Hot Dish, my replica of Mom's goulash that is like soul food in my family.

The result of my desire to be like Mom? Fifteen pints of Bread and Butter Pickles in my pantry. I opened one yesterday to dress up a chicken salad sandwich. I darn near drooled over the flavor. The irony? I chopped the pickles before mixing with them into the chicken salad, so their appearance didn't matter. But they sure looked beautiful in the jar!

The "Me, too," factor is strong, like a magnet that pulls us toward things we want to be or do or have in our lives. I garden like Mom gardened because I love the food she prepared and if I don't make it, I don't eat it. You cannot buy my mom's pickles. You can only make them. You cannot buy my mom's Blue Plum Pie, you can only make it, which I did, recently, for my brother, so we could share a bit of mom.

Where in your life have you said, "Me, too!" as it relates to your mom? What things do you create, make, bake, cook or do because your mom did them, and in the process, she set a pretty good example? What things do you make, just so you can share a bit of your mom with your family?

The biggest example of my mother's life isn't her pickles, as good as they are. It's the hard work and the kindness that were her way of saying, "I love you." It wasn't easy to raise a family on the prairie without a food processor. But she did it, and she did it well.

When I told a friend in Michigan what I'd done this week, she said, "You really are a prairie woman." I smiled, taking it as a huge compliment. Then I looked up, my way of seeing Mom, and said, "Thanks Mom. Me, too!"

My best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dee Dee". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop at the end of the second "Dee".

Dee Dee

Dear Mom E-Letter is a free, monthly publication that encourages the journey of remembering and celebrating the gifts of a mom, and supports healing from loss. Please pass this on to your family, friends, as well as your pastor or parish nurse in order to help others who share this journey.

*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.DeeDeeRaap.com.*