

# What my mother taught me.

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WHAT MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

Most of what my mother taught me occurred in a place our family refers to as "the mountain." This mountain-of-sorts, barely approachable by vehicle, is nestled within the rugged woods of Stevens County. It was here that my mother built a foundation for a lifetime of lessons.

Having grown up a city girl in the Midwest, Mom knew firsthand about the comforts of middle-class life. Her father's success as a business owner provided her with everything she needed and more. A couple of years after graduating from college with a psychology degree, my mother met and married my father. Two years later I was born, with my sister following along shortly thereafter. Full of excitement, Mom accompanied her young family in the pursuit of establishing a home far away from the confines of city life.

The first summer on the mountain consisted of my father building a rustic log cabin using blueprints designed by my mother. Meanwhile, nine acres of forest accompanying the cabin provided plenty of opportunity for my sister and me to play. Mom must have started us off on our adventures before going on to the tasks of cooking meals on the old Coleman campstove and assisting my father with the building.

After a long and tiring summer, our house was up. In spite of having no bedrooms or indoor plumbing, we found our eyes gazing upon the beautiful golden logs hewn by my father. Mom must have stood back in awe knowing the vast amount of work required to complete such a task.

More dreams were fulfilled when two sons completed

the family over the course of the next four years. Many happy moments occurred as we children made our way in the midst of this serene setting.

Now the hard work of living began. With no prior experience in this kind of lifestyle, Mom sought out the tools of determination and faith to help her navigate through this adventure. Some of the difficulties involved the obvious struggles inherent to rural living. Wild animals, snow storms, and power outages were commonplace issues.

But even more common were the trials my parents encountered in attempting to live a self-sufficient lifestyle while still trying to earn enough income to provide for the necessities of a growing family. At 34, Mom found herself in the middle of nowhere raising four children. My father, who worked diligently, could not always be the support my mother needed. Many times the pressures of a pioneer lifestyle closed in on her. Without the help of extended family and with limited financial resources, my mom could have easily given up.

Mom's willingness to live for her family inspired her to rise up against what looked like insurmountable obstacles. Throughout our time on the mountain Mom washed hundreds of loads of laundry in her wringer washer, prepared thousands of meals from our vast supply of garden produce, and thought up countless ways to keep four children from clobbering each other. Her ingenuity eludes me.

A vibrant Christian faith also entered the picture while my siblings and I were young. Through attending a small country church, Mom became converted to a life that embraces God. After wading through some difficult years of solitude and struggle, she began thriving within her new-found faith.

As I entered my teen years, Mom started working as a caregiver for elderly clients. In spite of working in dilapidated conditions, Mom strove to maintain a positive attitude. Then, after twelve years of living on the mountain, a promotion for my mother moved our family to Spokane. Today, sixteen years after moving to the city, Mom has successfully supervised hundreds of clients in her work setting. With true flexibility, this woman has shown that the same virtues needed to survive life in a cabin can be used to thrive within the work force.

Thankfully, my parents chose not to sell their mountain property. Now, during the summer months it reawakens as their grandchildren trample across the forest acreage. Although the logs in our cabin may not shine as brightly as in the days of my childhood, they continually remind my siblings and me of our mother's faithfulness to climb every mountain. ☺

