

Dan Naumovich: Here's to you, Mom(s)

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What's left to say about moms that hasn't been said before? Ever since Howard Johnson and Theodore Morse got together in 1915 and knocked out the music and lyrics to the song, "M-O-T-H-E-R" ("M is for the million things she gave me"), all other tributes to motherhood have paled in comparison.

But here it is, May 9, and it's incumbent upon me to speak up, or my name will be M-U-D.

First and foremost, thank you. We couldn't have done it without you. (One of my favorite quips of all time comes from Dorothy Parker, who, on the occasion of a friend giving birth, offered this sentiment: "Good work, Mary. We all knew you had it in you.")

Which is to say that mothers are indispensable — a fact that is genetically irrefutable.

But did you know that the opposite may not be true? I've heard of certain species that can self-reproduce without male interference and have read credible scientific speculation that the human race could evolve to the point where the Y chromosome is as useless as a father on Super Bowl Sunday. (Of course, a world without dads would beget future generations of kids who never learn to ride a two-wheeler, but that's hardly apocalyptic.)

Women aren't moms simply by virtue of biological obligation. They do more.

But they're also unique, and it's difficult to write a column that speaks to them all. Even acknowledging that childbirth can be a bit of a slog doesn't recognize all of those wonderful mothers who adopt. So I'm going to take a moment to write about one specific mom. Other moms may feel free to feel honored vicariously.

When it comes to recognizing achievement, we're a society that likes to look at the numbers. Based on statistics alone, my mom is without a doubt one of motherhood's legends.

A 58-year career as a mom. Ten kids. Thirty-two grandkids. Five great-grandkids. Those numbers don't lie, and she did it all before the fertility drug era started inflating numbers.

But hers isn't a career built solely on longevity. She's elevated the term "homemaker" to a whole

new level. (I never understood why “stay-at-home mom” became the preferred nomenclature over “homemaker.” The latter is more active and entrepreneurial, while the former hints at agoraphobia.)

Growing up, we had home-cooked meals every night except Friday, when we were forced to forage through a refrigerator full of leftovers. To this day, I won’t order meatloaf or spaghetti and meatballs at a restaurant because it could only disappoint.

A talented seamstress, mom made wedding gowns for all seven of her daughters and dozens of bridesmaid dresses. Her fashion sense was such that she refused to make me the suit I was once convinced I needed for eighth-grade graduation.

Somehow, she knew that pictures of me in a white “Saturday Night Fever” suit would have haunted me in the years to come.

Mom taught us to be self-sufficient, but not shy about asking for help. We were never tardy at school. It took more than 40 years for her nest to empty, yet I’ve never heard her swear once.

Mom turns 80 this year, and she’s still at the top of her game. She’s taking a computer class so she can get in on the family e-mail threads, and she recently celebrated her 1,000th visit to Curves. Every year, she and my dad host a post-Christmas sleepover for the grandkids, a feat that would push someone half her age to renounce all ties to maternity.

So to my mom, to your mom, to my children’s mom and to her mom, and to you if you’re a mom or heed a mom’s calling: Happy Mother’s Day.

To borrow a phrase from Johnson and Morse, “You mean the world to us.”

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