

points of view

Paying tribute to moms everywhere

WE COULDN'T have picked a better time of the year to honor moms everywhere.

Tulips have peeked, the trees are sprouting, everything is green and fresh. It's spring.

And this Sunday is Mothers Day. Motherhood symbolizes that new beginning, a fresh outlook and a lifetime of growth and memories.

It represents the changing seasons. As we grow, our views of our mothers indeed shift and change, year to year. And mothers certainly have changed with the times.

Mostly, motherhood means a welcome warmth, similar to what we

feel outdoors this time of year.

In many cases, like mine, motherhood equals a special kind of friendship.

Our friendship grew from a small seed that took more than 20 years to blossom. The seed was buried for a while, its surroundings ruffling with turbulence. But it finally peeked out, then slowly sprouted into something beautiful.

Most of us carry a special blossom of our own, with individual memories for Mothers Day.

BEING A mother doesn't endow



Casey Hans

one with superhuman traits — although there was a time when we all thought that was so. My mom couldn't have been more popular than when she doled out the Fizzles to neighborhood kids, served a favorite plateful of Franco American Spa-

ghetti, or put on a birthday party with 14 giggling 7-year-olds.

We all have stories. How about the pre-teen years, when she gave a 3-minute hourglass as a gift — to remind me when to get off of the phone.

Or, as I discovered in later years, my mother's discomfort and fear watching her daughter leave the house with "that hippie" boyfriend.

Mothers give their children many things besides the polarities of love and grief and caring and discipline. They're human, and pass along aspects of their lives, both good and bad.

MY MOTHER gave me a love of journalism and writing — the path she would have followed if her destiny, and society, hadn't dictated a family.

She was quite proud when I began writing in college and made journalism my career soon after. In fact, she helped me title my first column in 1977, "Grindings from the Peppermill."

But there is much more. She also gave all five of her children the strength to live life to its fullest, to enjoy what this world offers, and re-

mined us of what is truly important. She raised each of us to be ourselves, and be proud of our accomplishments.

My mom left this world in March, but I have no doubt she remains with us, guiding us with an even higher strength.

Friends say we'll never know how loved she was, and how many lives she touched. One told me she would always remember her as a "classy lady."

I guess that about says it all. Happy Mothers Day, to moms everywhere. You are loved.

Another side of Brooks Tug of war is constant

SITTING AT the editor's desk and reading letters has got to be one of the better parts of the job.

The letters can make you smile, laugh and sometimes cry. But they almost always are interesting and worth the time reading. Frankly, I appreciate letters even more so than phone calls. It demonstrates that someone cares enough to take the time and write — a rapidly diminishing skill. Both, I'm talking about — writing and taking the time.

I want to share a letter with you today that made me laugh.

You might have already read it in our letters to the editor's section. It was a response from outgoing Oakland County prosecutor L. Brooks Patterson.

In recent weeks the Observer & Eccentric ran a less-than-flattering farewell editorial to the flamboyant prosecutor who has decided to go into private practice after his many years as an elected official.

NEEDLESS TO say, Patterson has a lot of supporters in Oakland County, having been re-elected several times. And our mailbox reflected that support with some venomous attacks on our editorial view and equally ardent support of Patterson. I was particularly interested in reading these letters as they came



Steve Barnaby

across the transom because I had a hand in sculpting the editorial. We have a work group here at the Observer & Eccentric which spends time researching issues and discussing editorial stands.

We do a lot of debating after which someone who feels very strongly about the subject at hand is assigned to actually write the piece. I felt strongly about the Patterson years, so the onus fell on me.

Patterson responded immediately. And that response shows the side of the man which a lot of folks don't know because of his militant public persona.

It went like this: "Based upon your recent editorial, can I assume that I won't be doing your legal work come January 1, 1989? Sincerely, L. Brooks Patterson"

SHORT AND sweet. But I loved

every word. It's a letter I will keep among the collection of letters I enjoy the most.

It shows the private side of Brooks Patterson, the side I'll miss. It shows the wit and restraint under fire it takes to be a public official. For years now, I've done a lot of Brooks bashing. But it's only his public performance that has been noted, not his private personality.

Years ago I adopted the code that a public person's private life was their own, and I wouldn't criticize someone because of a personal quirk or idiosyncrasy. Obviously lots of journalists don't agree. But that's my code.

It's not always easy to write critical things about a public official who personally you think is an all right person. And I'm sure it's even tougher for public officials to read the criticism about themselves.

In all these years, Patterson, on the occasions that we bumped into one another, would always just smile, maybe slip a crack or two in to make you smile, just enough to make you feel comfortable. Then he would go on to discuss some other issue.

That's the private side of Brooks Patterson, the side I've always liked and appreciated.

I just thought you ought to know.

TRUE OR FALSE: The U.S. Constitution provides for three levels of government — federal, state and local.

False is the correct answer, which may surprise you. The Constitution recognizes only federal and state governments.

Local governments are creatures of the state, deriving their powers either from state laws or state-granted charters. But American tradition recognizes and honors "grass roots" government.

THE CONSTANT tug of war between the state and its creatures bothers legislators all the time.

Ann Arbor, Southfield and Detroit have actively considered rent control ordinances in response to local problems. Ann Arbor's proposed ordinance even went to the ballot last month and was trounced by something like 2-1.

The state Senate passed a bill prohibiting such local activity, but the House sat in it in order to await the Ann Arbor outcome.

Conventional wisdom holds, correctly, that price controls don't work. They didn't work for the Romans in 301 A.D. when the edict of Diocletian placed price ceilings on 900 commodities, 130 grades of labor and many freight rates. They didn't work for President Nixon in 1971.

An economy is too complicated, the methods of getting around price controls too diverse, the stifling effect on trade too onerous for controls to last long. Prohibit price controls



Tim Richard

and forget them — that likely will be the answer.

CITIES ALSO can be laboratories of experiment from which the state can learn.

Case in point: anti-party ordinances aimed at curbing teen drinking in homes and motels, Farmington Hills in 1985 was first in line to attempt the ban. A whole swarm of cities followed.

The ordinance had its shortcomings. Officials in Farmington Hills and in Little Saline, south of Ann Arbor, found kids would meander outside the municipal boundary for a beer blast. The ordinance applied only to the city limits. Saline appealed to surrounding townships to pass similar ordinances, but the townships declined.

Last week the Senate Judiciary Committee reported out a bill making it a violation of state law for anyone 17 or older to serve alcohol or drugs to a minor. The bill is likely to sail through both houses, even though some townships around Sa-

line don't want it.

Such is the nature of the parent-creature relationship.

THERE IS A classic case where the Michigan Legislature did go too far in regulating one of its creatures, the city of Detroit.

In 1971 the Legislature passed a law replacing the city's own board of water and sewer commissioners with a public works board picked by the Legislature. Justice Thomas M. Cooley, for whom a law school has since been named, roared down from the Supreme Court bench:

"... the question, broadly and nakedly stated, can be nothing short of this: whether local self-government in this state is or is not a mere privilege conferred by the legislature in its discretion, and which may be withdrawn at any time at pleasure? ... I can conceive of no argument in support of the legislative authority which will stop short of this planetary and sovereign right."

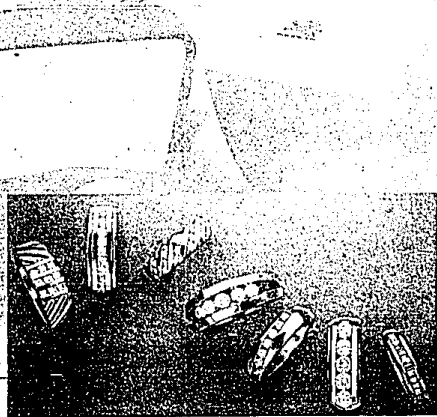
And so saying, Cooley wrote an opinion declaring the state law unconstitutional.

The moral of the story is that, although the state is the parent and local government is the child, the Supreme Court will prevent child abuse.

Tim Richard is editor of state and Oakland County news at the Observer & Eccentric.

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