

Off the Walls

Crabiness continuous

By NANCY WALLS SMITH

It's finally happened. I had a feeling it would. I'm turning into my mother! Today when I heard myself yell at the kids, "Bring that food back in this house; we're not here to feed the whole neighborhood!" it was like an echo from the past. How many millions of times had my own mother said those exact words to me? And how many millions of times had I thought, "Geez, what a crab!"

I hear tell that once crabiness starts setting in, there's just no turning back to the good-natured self you once were. I didn't want to grow up to be the "bad guy." When you have kids, somehow it just turns out that way.

I can remember as a child I made a great many solemn vows concerning the type of mother I was going to be some day. I would never be selfish and would always let my kids give away all the fruits, candies or cakes they wanted to share with their little friends. We could always get more at the grocery store.

I would take my children on picnics whenever they wanted to go. Or at least serve meals to them in the backyard whenever they requested it. After all, it would be no trouble and it would make them happy.

I also wasn't going to get all worked up over little things like fingerprints on the walls or pop spilled on the carpet. I would be too busy playing with my children to ever bother with such silliness as keeping the house clean.

As a child, I firmly believed that if someone wanted something, you should naturally give it to them. Unfortunately, my mother didn't share this philosophy which caused me to think at times that she was a terrible meanie.

So here I sit, a terrible grown-up meanie. I won't let my kids give away food (that is, I tell them not to. They do anyway). I seldom serve them lunch outside because they have a tendency to wander away from their meals while the bugs romp amid the juice and jam. And, what's worse, I don't buy or give them everything they ask for.

I guess I'm just a failure as a mother. I've been known to yell and



scream and occasionally even spank a bottom. I'm nothing like the mother I had planned on being.

But the really spooky part is that someone else has turned out to be that vision of kindness and warmth that was once my ideal. My own dear mother, "Mrs. Scream & Scream of 1958," has turned out to be the ole softie who lets the kids do, have and act any way, and any how they want.

This lady, who used to go into an apoplexy if I happened to set a glass on the coffee table without a coaster under it, would not get the least bit upset if her grandchildren spread a layer of peanut butter all over that same table. Instead she would just smile and remark on how cute they are when they're expressing themselves creatively.

So I've turned into my mother, and my mother has turned into what I wanted to be, and the kids have turned into... Oh, my, this is getting confusing. There is a moral here somewhere, but I'm much too crabby today to try to figure it out.

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