

Author Guest Post: Jeanne Starr Gater, Author of *Bring Back Summertime*

Jersey Girl Book Reviews welcomes Jeanne Starr Gater, Author of ***Bring Back Summertime!***



My Mother, My Adviser, My Friend

What are your first memories of your Mother? A warm and snugly shoulder to sink your face into? The protector who held you close and rubbed your back? The beautiful one who kissed your cheek softly as she vowed silently that she

would raise you to stellar heights; and make sure no one would harm her baby, her child - whether you were the first born, the second born, or somewhere down the line of the fragile and precious human beings she brought into this world? As you raised your wee, little head you knew her scent, and it was oh so wonderful being nestled in her bosom. But, if anyone else ever held you when you only wanted 'her' you screamed to the high heavens until she picked you up and consoled you. Gasping for air against your own frightful cries thinking you had lost her; she quickly quiets you down, your tender and teary eyes blink and you are proud to burp on her shoulder as you cling to the life force that gave you life - your Mother.

Your next forage in the huge world that challenged you was crawling across the floor, or carpet, scampering in sheer delight towards the image you saw that always broadened your smile again, and again. It could have been your father, your older sister, or brother, but quite spectacularly, most often, it was your mother. You sensed that she didn't mind too much if you drooled all over the floor, or spit out baby food as she tried to feed you. She was clearly exasperated, but you watched her face intently and saw her frowns turn to smiles as she grabbed you up with wide open arms to wash you up, or take you upstairs for your rubber ducky bath where you could splash and play in the water. And ah, later you again fall asleep in the special comfort zone of the loving arms of the one you spent months cocooning with before your introduction into your present reality. She was special. Your first teacher, your first love, your first *First*.

But alas, there came the time when she would say: "**STOP!**" Her big bright smiles suddenly turned upside down into frowns. You heard: "*Stop this and stop that!*" And then you heard: "**NO!**" Those scary words were echoing from the same face, but a different tone of voice emerged that was not always so calm. So, you would blurt back to her: "**NO!**" Now that you're trekking into your terrible two's she was always saying more and more: "**STOP!**" or "**NO!**" For heaven's sake, stop what? I'm just exploring this new world that you brought me into. That beautiful image before you has now become a little blurred. "**STOP!**" the voice commands, and now waving your little fists back at her in defense of your efforts, you retort: "**STOP!**" "**NO!**" Her voice commands and you learn to repeat: "**NO!**" You really don't like all this new learning, but it's coming from that same dear lady that held you so warmly on her shoulders, and who rocked you to sleep at night; so inevitably you learn to stop, and to listen, and to hear. Later on you recall how she stashed kitchen cabinet things high so you wouldn't get to them. You remember her soothing

away the hurt and pain when you bruised your elbow or skinned your knee. The pain didn't stay around a long time after she applied the Bactine and the bandage and told you how brave you were; but please **stop** running so fast and be more careful when chasing butterflies, and fireflies and playing with your friends.

Later in life, those miserable colds and sore throats are no match for the tender loving care she anxiously bestows as she watches you every minute, and comes into your room every other hour during the night to make sure you're covered up. It doesn't matter what the ailment: chicken pox, measles, trips to the doctor, special lotions and potions, magically she's always there when you need her with chicken soup, crackers, an assuring smile and a soft touch. A mother's T.L.C. is unmatched as she works feverishly to make sure she gets you well and keeps you well.

She tells you every day how beautiful you are. You go sound to sleep at night thinking and repeating: "*The most beautiful girl in the whole wide world ... me!*" Pride is instilled. Prayers are prayed when she kneels beside you giving you comfort that inside your personal world with her is safety; and outside there are angels and protectors for you that go way high up towards the sun and the moon, and those faraway twinkling stars. The bedtime stories she reads to you drift you soundly and securely into dreamland. You're being molded and shaped into a new you.

As you wander brightly into the years unfolding ahead of you, you clearly notice small stepping stones you have to cross; but all too often you're dismayed because the stones have huge gaps between them and are hard to jump across without falling. As a son, or a daughter, you look back over the broad terrain, over the fields, over the ponds and the lilies questioning where is my Mother? What would she do? What would she say? How do I cross? How do I get through the winds and storms in life and the challenges ahead of me without her? How do I fare without the ability to take her with me, or have her carry me over the rough spots I need to traverse? Then you hear that wise and oftentimes scornful voice in your head speak: "*Be ready, and do not be afraid when hard times come cause things are not perfect for all of us, all the time, you know.*" And then the chocolate cake memories, or vanilla ice cream or peach cobbler aromas creep in, and you savor the calm and unique moments of yesteryear to help settle you, and to get you through seemingly hard times. If Mom's favorite was baking a black raspberry pie, or lemon meringue pie; just the memory, thought, or childhood reverie of her baking in

the kitchen soothes your adult weary bones. Dragging yourself slowly forward, your second wind says to you it's been another hard day today, but when I get time this weekend I'm going to bake something special for my kids just like Mom did for me. You ponder and wonder, how did she really do it all? Especially when we tugged on her apron strings, her purse strings, and her heart strings oftentimes prompting her into her military stance when she would again admonish us: *"Money doesn't grow on trees, you know! How about a summer job so you can learn some responsibility before you go traipsing off to college and expecting me to pay your college bills and do your laundry?"* You steal away for your own pow wow to the chagrin of your siblings telling them: *"Don't bring home any clothes from college for Mom to wash even though she says it's okay ... cause hasn't Mom done enough for us? Enuf already!"*

You reflect back and you remember those teen years when playing softball, basketball or going swimming was more important than hearing Mom say: *"Please, please clean up your room!"* Or all those work tired days when she would come home and wearily ask: *"Why are there dishes in the sink? Whose turn is it to wash the dishes?"* Then we would hear again one of her most challenging refrains: *"Didn't I tell you; this is no one man's army! Everyone has to work and everyone has to pitch in to make the household work! We are family!"* Or that repetitive stern voice that reminded us time and again: *"Don't you know that everything has a place? Find the right place for your toys, your school books, your hair ribbons, your clothes and then you will have order in your room. Please remember to share with your sisters and brothers. The more you share the more you will have to share!"*

Some of us were luckier than others. Close knit families living in Betty Crocker type neighborhoods, with low divorce rates, and family and friends looking out for one another. Teen friends would often relate that neighbors were quick to report any wrong doing, or to personally chastise them when their mom wasn't around. Now they say the days of the good old neighborhoods are gone. Teens have too much freedom and privacy, and are not only being influenced by their local peers; but can be dangerously influenced by the unsavory presence of real life monsters on web sites they stumble upon on the internet. So, how do we stay on track and continue to build character, and give advice to our sons and daughters so we leave them full of valuable knowledge, eagerly awaiting their platform to gratefully announce what their mom taught them?

Some of my most favorite tidbits of advice gifted to me from my mother were: *“Always remember that you come from good stock. Your parents and grandparents always looked out for one another in good times and in bad times. They would help one another with cooking, cleaning, building and planting crops.”* Another pointed message from my mother during my teen years that often followed me during my college days: *“My kids don't ride around in Cadillac cars, but they're going to have Cadillac minds!”*

So, how about it? What precious pearls of wisdom did your mother instill within you that transformed you uniquely into who you are today; or that spurred you to move higher and higher. What were your special lessons learned that caused you to have a number of quality traits and attitudes about life that you're anxious and proud to share? What window of opportunity did she create for you that still makes you smile when you think of her, or when you call her on the phone? Was there a landslide of advice, or just some nice quiet reminders that served as gemstones for you to grasp and instill within your sons and daughters to help them gallantly move through their life's journey? What wrong turns, or pitfalls did she help you avoid whenever you heard her speak to that remarkable inner voice within you? What lessons of forgiveness or trust did she share with you?

Gail M. from Chicago, Illinois related:

“My mother instilled so much. I'll start with, honesty. She said, no matter how bad a situation is or what kind of trouble you may be in .. be honest. Keep your word. This is the most important one of all. Your word is your bond. Always keep your word. I think this was the most important one because I heard this one the most. Love your enemies and always trust God. always be a lady - never loud. Always be soft-spoken. Like I said, there are so many. One more. She said: You can soar as high as you want. Never stop dreaming!”

Your Mother, your Adviser, your Friend. What is some of the best advice she's given you that makes you forever think of her fondly, and lovingly?

*Jeanne Starr Gater
Greensboro, GA
10/3/11*

