

A day to honor our mothers

When I was asked to write an article about Mother's Day, I thought, "Piece of cake ... what an easy job."

After all, I had a mother whom I loved very much; it would be no trouble to share all the wonderful times we had.

Reflecting on the task at hand, I discovered not such an easy task after all. I lost my mother when I was a fairly young adult, and there is still a hole in my life and an empty place at my table.

I think of her every day and what I have missed throughout my life when I hear friends talk of their experiences with their mothers ... I'm a little envious.

Mother's Day on Sunday provides a perfect opportunity to give tribute to our mothers and all the mother figures in our lives. It is with great honor that I share what I have learned about the origin of Mother's Day.

Mother's Day, or the celebration of motherhood, can be traced back to ancient times when Greeks celebrated the Mother of the Gods Rhea during an annual spring festival. Early Christians celebrated on the fourth Sunday of Lent in honor of the Virgin Mary.

England celebrated a Mothering Sunday in which servants were given the day off and encouraged to spend the day with their mothers.

In America, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Julia Ward Howe, author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and a defender of equal rights, advocated for observance of a Mother's Day for Peace in 1870. Unfortunately, her efforts for a national holiday failed.

In 1907, Anna M. Jarvis, a Philadelphia schoolteacher, along with others began a letter writing campaign to establish a national Mother's Day. Anna was influenced greatly by her mother (Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis), who had worked to improve sanitary conditions during the Civil War under a program she called Mothers' Work Days.

Anna Maria later worked to reconcile Union and Confederate neighbors after the war. Anna persuaded her mother's church in West Virginia to celebrate Mother's Day on the anniversary of her mother's death on May 10, 1908.

Anna's efforts paid off as the custom caught on, and in 1914, President



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Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday in May as a national holiday in honor of mothers. All I can say for these ladies is, "You go girls!"

You have probably heard many of the adages from your mother and may have some to add, such as: "Close the door"; "Were you born in a barn?"; "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all"; "Eat your vegetables"; and, "If everyone jumped off a cliff, would you do it, too?"

Did you know: There are 84 million moms in the U.S.; there are more phone calls made on Mother's Day than on any other day of the year (Pew Research) — however, the number of people calling their mother has declined in recent years due to e-mail and other electronic means of communication (looks as if we are staying in touch, but the method has changed); and it is the third-largest card-sending holiday ... any ideas on the top two?

We respect and admire the strong, talented women in our lives for the love, support, acknowledgement and understanding they give unconditionally. Jane Perkins, Sheridan Senior Center activities director, recently shared with me how rewarding it is to work in an organization where she gets to be around moms every day!

While cards, flowers, and gifts are very appealing, mothers often say time spent with family is the greatest gift of all. Isn't that true for all of us?

We invite you and your family to the Senior Center to share lunch with your mother on Mother's Day and any day. It will be an occasion to visit with family and maybe make a new friend or two.

The Senior Center is open 365 days a year and serves lunch Monday through Saturday 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and Sundays noon to 12:45 p.m.

Please have a wonderful Mother's Day!

Linda Gostas has been assistant director of the Sheridan Senior Center since January 2000.

Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.