



Mom's the Word!

I'm a bit amazed at just how frequently my family members are having birthdays on Sunday - the 'A Story A Week' publishing day! Both my father and my daughter Himi became the subject of a 'Story a Week' last year, and today we have still one more ... it's my mother's turn!

Now we all well know the rules about a lady's birthday; we may or may not pretend it isn't happening, and we perhaps don't talk very loudly about it, but we certainly don't put a number to it! (But it is a curious coincidence that both my parents are 'rabbits' ... the same as me!)

When I wrote a little bit about my parents' life in the previous story, I mentioned some of the various places that they lived over the years; but I didn't emphasize the background - that the young couple, together with their very young children, decided to emigrate from the country of their birth and live overseas. This was long before the era of easy international travel, and to emigrate meant to make a nearly total break with one's home country. So when my mother boarded that ocean liner in 1957, she was leaving behind everything and everybody she knew, to face a completely unknown life overseas.

Out of all the many possible 'episodes' I could tell you about our life in Canada in the subsequent years, let me try and pick a couple that may give you an indication of her character.

She considered it her top priority - no, her only priority - to provide the best possible environment for her children to grow up in. I have no memory of ever coming home from school to an empty house, and I never owned such a thing as a house key. I had no use for it; the door was always open, and she was always there. And although it sounds a bit old-fashioned these days to mention such a thing, and some people might even laugh at the idea, I know that all three of us children can remember the feeling of running home from school, throwing open the door, and being greeted by the scent of fresh-baked cookies. Do children still have that experience these days? I hope so!

That sort of episode is of course easily understandable by Japanese readers of these stories, but I wonder about the next one ... My mother was of course devoted to her own family, but there were also occasions when I would arrive home from school and hear the sound of a crying baby. Over the course of many years, she volunteered many times as a 'foster mother', taking care of unwanted new-born babies in our home until permanent families could be found for them. I didn't pay much attention to these babies at the time, as I was only a little kid, but when I consider it now, it is almost unbearable to think about her feelings - taking loving care of a tiny baby for a couple of months, only to then have to stand aside and watch as the new family came to take it away ...

And always, all through the years, she tried as much as possible to develop and encourage independence in her own children, even though she knew that such 'training' would ensure that they would not only fly away one day, but that they would fly far away.

Those readers who know about me, and respect and admire what I have accomplished over the years, should understand where it all began, and who is responsible for the 'groundwork'. I got pretty lucky in the lottery where we 'choose' our parents!

Happy birthday Mom!

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