

Done at the city of Washington this ninth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, and the Independence of the United States one hundred and thirty-eight.

Woodrow Wilson

By the President

William Jennings Bryan

Secretary of State

(SEAL)

My research into the origins of Mother's Day inexorably led me into Mother's Day poetry and song. There is a great deal of material out there extolling the virtues of motherhood. Most of it is sentimental and I like that

Here is one that I especially liked written by Jane Taylor entitled "My Mother".

Who fed me from her gentle breast,
And hushed me in her arms to rest,
And on my cheek sweet kisses pressed?
My Mother.

When sleep forsook my open eye,
Who was it sang sweet lullaby,
And rocked me that I should not cry?
My Mother

Who sat and watched my infant head,
When sleeping on my cradle bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed?

When pain and sickness made me cry,
Who gazed upon my heavy eye,
And wept for fear that I should die?

Who ran to help me when I fell,
And would some pretty story tell,
Or kiss the place to make it well?
My Mother

Who taught my infant lips to pray,
And love God's holy book and day,
And walk in wisdom's pleasant way?

And can I ever cease to be
Affectionate and kind to thee,
Who was so very kind to me,
My Mother?

Ah no! the thought I cannot bear,
And if God please my life to spare,
I hope I shall reward thy care,
My Mother.

When thou art feeble old and gray,
My healthy arms shall be thy stay,
And I will soothe thy pains away,
My Mother.

And when I see thee hang thy head,
'Twill be my turn to watch thy bed,
And tears of sweet affection shed,
My Mother.

For God who lives above the skies,
Would look with vengeance in His eyes
If I should ever dare despise
My Mother.

I can relate to the last three verses of this poem. My own mother and father cared for my aging maternal grandmother, Emma Burdett Tracy, who was so crippled with rheumatism (now called arthritis) that she could not walk. She also suffered with incontinence which my mother lovingly took care of. She lived with us for about eight years until she passed away at age 83.

She sat in a rocking chair most of the day darning socks slipped over a burned out light bulb. Mom and Dad pulled her around the house with her in the rocking chair to take her from room to room. There were probably wheel chairs in those days but my family was too poor to have such a luxury. I well remember how flat the rockers were worn in the middle from this means of transporting grandma.

Mom and Dad also had to lift her in and out of the chair to put her in bed and take care of other necessities.

My mother and father were so kind in this responsibility that I'm sure that this alone will merit them a special place in heaven.

Then there was the Great Depression. Many here can relate to that. The Southern Pacific railroad tracks were near our home and we had a great fascination for the great locomotives going by. We used to climb on top of the chicken coop roof which sloped from upward from south to north to get a better view of the trains to the south of us. One day, my brother, Wendell, was walking backward up the roof to get a better view and walked right off the roof. He landed on his head on a bottle and scalped a three inch arc of hair from his head that had to be sewed back on. Hobos (men riding the freight cars) were abundant. Men were scouring the country for work. They often stopped at our house and chopped wood for the kitchen stove for food.

At a very early age, I sensed my mother's anxiety for the welfare of her family. There was little food to eat. Father could not find work. Mortgage payments on our small farm could not be met and it was eventually lost.

But mother could sew. Her 1920 vintage Singer Sewing Machine now graces our house as an antique. She had five little boys. Using cast-off men's suits she somehow managed to make little suits for all of us to wear to church. She also made our shirts.

Mom prized her precious sewing machine, yet allowed her 12 year old son, Tracy, to take it apart and put it back together to find out how it worked. She also allowed me to use the kitchen table as a work bench, where I could saw, drill, and nail in wood and metal to construct machinery, particularly electrical in nature. It was here that I made electric motors, microphones, speakers, crystal radios and such.

Money was badly needed, so Mom took a day-time job as a maid at the Broom Hotel on the corner of Washington Avenue and 25th Street. Consequently, my mother would be up late every night, 2:00 O'clock or so, washing on a scrubbing board or boiling clothes on the wood burning stove). At other times she would be ironing, sewing or mending.

At one period of time on the farm, Mom and her two older sons, Tracy and Eugene along with dozens of other boys, girls and older people picked string beans on another man's farm all day long in the hot sun. Mom was the champion picker and could make about \$1.00 per day. Kids could make about 40 or 50 cents.

The above incidents are only typical of the sacrifices that my mother made to care for her family.

Others in this room will have similar stories to tell.

A young man upon marriage soon gets to see another mother in his life, namely his wife, the mother of his children. I have been

fortunate enough to have these two wonderful mothers bless my life with their devotion, spirituality, sacrifice, encouragement, devotion to duty, and love.

May God bless these and all mothers this day, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.