

My Mom – My Heroine

Category: Unsung Heroes

written by Mary B. Wiecezak | April 11, 2023

Times were uncertain. It was World War II, and Dad was overseas, serving in the U.S Navy. Mom and I lived with my Polish grandparents, but she kept their apartment so we would have a place of our own when Dad returned. She worked long hours in a local laundry to make that dream come true.

Dad returned safely in 1945 and, shortly thereafter, I learned I was to be a big sister. Dad found employment in a factory, but finances were difficult. Rent for our small apartment was \$46.00 a month, taking a large percentage of Dad's salary. Mom struggled to keep food on the table, often going without, but seeing to it that her family wanted for nothing. Above all else, she wanted her children to be happy.

My brother and I were the envy of our neighborhood friends. Mom often took us on the subway to Manhattan to meet our television friends: Hop-a-long Cassidy, the Merry Mailman and Howdy Doody. I still remember how she haggled with a show employee to get us tickets to sit in the Peanut Gallery for a live performance!

The annual Christmas show at Radio City Music Hall was the highlight of the season, and tickets for the first performance were ninety-five cents. How Mom managed to save for those tickets remains a mystery to this day. We rose at the crack of dawn, rode the subway, and stood in a long line for hours in the cold.

The 1950s saw the arrival of baby brother number two and my parents finally able to buy a home. Mom insisted that we receive a Catholic education in our parish school. Tuition was only a dollar a month, and this seems minor today, but it meant an added expense for Mom.

She found a job as a long-distance telephone operator. Her two shifts had her travelling to Manhattan by subway twice a day and coming home late at night. Dad lost his job in the factory but secured a position as a bar tender in a local pub. Those were difficult days for us all.

Dad died at age fifty-six, while Mom lived on to eighty-eight. Her reward for all that hard work was that she got to enjoy her four grandchildren. To this day, she is still their heroine. And mine as well.

*Mary B. Wiecezak
Monroe, Connecticut*