

**1999 UUA General Assembly**  
**270 Interweave Sermon**

*Interweave Worship*  
**SNAPSHOTS--Mom's Memory Album**  
**or, "Remember the time ... ?"**

*by Ethel-Marie Underhill--Mother's Day 1995*

I have to tell you, I wanted children for as long as I can remember. As a little girl, I was rarely without a doll to mother. When Bob & I married in 1963 and Amy was born three years later, my dream of motherhood came true. I can remember looking into her sweet little face and knowing I was in love with this amazing gift of life.

I thought she was wonderful! I marveled at each tiny new thing she learned. I remember writing about her to a friend who was still single and a career woman. I must have gone on a bit because I received a reply addressed to "Dear Modest Parents and Wonder Child."

With the births of Laina and Yvonne, we had a family of three little girls under 4 1/2 years of age. Those were the baby years. I remember one day realizing that in addition to bathing four bodies (including my own) and shampooing four head of hair, I was trimming 80 fingernails and toenails. It wasn't as easy as it had been when I mothered my dolls so long ago.

Nurturing independence is certainly one important job of mothering. I remember Laina was about 4 when she learned to make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Each day when she got home from nursery school, she would make sandwiches for lunch for herself and her little sister, Yvonne. It took a long time and Yvonne always sat and waited patiently. The process required total silence. One day the bread was unusually soft and the peanut butter rather stiff and difficult to spread. Laina struggled with it for several minutes and finally said softly, "Damn."

Learning to use money is another form of independence. I remember the time Amy wanted to buy Bob a birthday present with her tooth fairy money. She thought a new suit would be nice.

Of course, being parents in the '60s, we wanted to use good psychology. One of our techniques was to give the girls choices. We thought we were pretty clever because we never said, "Do you want to go to bed now?" We'd say, "It's bedtime. Do you want to wear your pink pajamas or your blue ones?" Or, "Time for a bath. Do you want bubble bath or water toys in the tub?" Well, at our house when the girls were preschoolers, they weren't allowed to play outside after supper ... that was indoor time. I remember the evening Amy hopped down from the table and said, "I'm going out to play. Do you want me to use the front door or the back?"

And, oh, what a wealth of memories we collected during the year Bob taught overseas and we traveled around the world with our girls, ages 5, 7 & 9. Remember on the London bus, the nice British gentleman who, with a twinkle in his eye, asked Yvonne which of her big sisters was the naughtiest? ... and she pointed to me. Remember riding camels at birthday parties in India, and Santa Claus arriving on an elephant? Remember attending a Taiwanese elementary school-1800

Chinese children and our 3 little Americans. Remember the crowds around us in India and Taiwan? Everyone wanted to see the children with blond hair.

Well, our daughters are all adults now. They're dealing with careers, marriage, establishing their own homes. Like many families, ours has dealt with some serious traumas, but with the traumas have come triumphs. Maybe, just maybe, all of these little snapshot moments--and a hundred thousand more--all the simple, mundane, everyday-ness of our lives, built the bonds, the foundation which kept us strong and together. Now we're celebrating the next generation with the birth of our first grandchild, Corinne. Once more I looked into a dear little face--this time, amazingly, the face of the child of my child-- and once more, I fell in love with the gift of new life. And I suppose someday soon I'll get a letter addressed to "Dear Modest Grandparents and Wonder Child."