

### Many Hands Make Light Work

**I love to help people because I really enjoy working together with others.** If Ms. Miller is preparing for a speaker in the LGI, I want to help her her set up the tables and chairs, clean the board, and get the Smartboard running. When my daughter Claire's best friend was getting married, I wanted to give her her bridal shower, as she had no aunts to step up. I cleared out all the living room furniture, rented tables and chairs, decorated like a madwoman, and cooked, plated, and served a luncheon for 40. When a Sign-up Genius shows up in my email the question is not whether I will volunteer but what should I choose. I really enjoy making the popcorn at a football game or doing the chains, even when it is 50 degrees and sleeting!

**I started to love working with others as a kid because I loved working with my dad.** I always say that my parents never gave me chores to do, but maybe that is because I always just chipped in. My mom did her work when I was at school, and I played outside after school until dinner. But we ate dinner at 6 because my dad got home at 5:30, and and after dinner every night my dad and I would do the dishes. There was no set roles that we always did; we would just start clearing the table, rinsing, washing, drying, and putting away, just doing whatever the next thing to do was. On Saturdays, I would get up early with my dad and drive to his office with him, as my mom liked to sleep in. I would keep myself busy while he "got ahead" on his next week's work for a couple hours. When we got home, we attacked whatever needed doing: I might trim while he cut the grass, we might wash cars, clean the garage, unclog a drain, replace the batteries in the fire detectors, pull the boat out of the water and drain the motor.

**It was so nice working with my dad because he enjoyed working; he never complained.** We were productive, happy, and together; it was how I got to know him. I don't really know how else I would have gotten to know him. He didn't get home from work until 5:30. I would see his

car drive in, run home, wash up, set the table, and we would sit down to dinner. After cleaning up, I would do my homework and take a bath. I would sit with my mom and dad to watch one T.V. show then kiss them goodnight and go to bed to read my book and fall asleep. On Friday nights, all the kids on the street would play out until 8:30 after dinner. After chores on Saturday, he would watch some sports on T.V. , and on Saturday nights, my mom and he would go out. Sundays was church and an early dinner after at 1. We would either have family over or go to someone's house. Then I did homework, and the evening was like other evenings before a school night.

I really wanted to be with my dad on my own because I was kind-of like an only child. My brother is 12 years older than I am and my sister is 14 years older, so by the time I was 6, they were both away at college, and neither ever moved back home after. Being around my mom and dad together was awkward because they often argued, or I should say that my mom seemed to always be complaining. She would complain about him falling asleep in his chair after dinner every night or always saying that whatever she cooked was delicious or not having an opinion about where we should go on vacation or defending the president when the president was obviously wrong. I know now that she was bored. She had a degree in journalism from the University of Michigan when most women didn't go to college, and she was brilliant and creative. She wanted to work, but married women, or most of them, didn't work and so she was stuck. She had thoughts stored up all day to talk about, she wanted a real opinion on the fancy dishes she had worked hard to create, she wanted to share ideas about all the cool places we could visit on the money she had so carefully saved for our vacation, and she wanted to argue about politics as she would have as a journalist. He just wanted her to be happy and was tired from working all day.

So while I showed my mom I loved her by watching her cook and keeping a running list of my favorite dishes in order and listening to her tell of all her plans for our vacation while we looked at maps and asking a million questions about Vietnam and Watergate and the Women's Liberation Movement, I showed my dad I loved him by being quiet and helpful and never, ever, complaining. And I knew he knew I loved him because he would just stop working and look at me sometimes and smile, and I would look back at him and the love would just shine right out of my eyes like a beam. My mom and dad didn't give big hugs, but he would put his hand on my back behind my neck when I walked next to him. No hug could have been more warm. We didn't used to say "I love you" very often, but he would call me "buddy." I knew what he meant. Buddies loved each other.

So even though I have learned to give hugs and say "I love you," I still want to show people how much I love them by chipping in and giving them a hand. The Quakers teach that the greatest expression of God's love is when you let his love flow through you to others in your community as you help them with the work of daily life; both the giver and the receiver are blessed. They have a saying, "Many hands make light work!"