

Honoring mother



by *Ruth Yellowhawk*

My mother loved the earth. Nothing could please her more than to see nature's abundance displayed prominently in our home and nurturing our bellies.

If we brought home a rock, or stick, a handful of dandelions, or a crumpled stalk of Queen Anne's Lace, my mother would stop whatever she was doing (and believe me she was doing a lot with ten children to look after!) and she would say: "Oh my, this is so beautiful!" She made us feel special for noticing the rich creation before us. Then she would gather a cherished bowl, or a vase, or a plate and make a centerpiece for our table.

Mom saw abundance. It was a gift. She courted it. And more importantly she invited us to court it too. But not in the way I have all too often mistakenly encouraged my son to take notice in that "aren't those flowers gorgeous?" kind of way. No, she tied us to the land by letting us roam. For hours and hours.

She let us get hurt, stung, bruised and battered by the natural world. We left each experience wanting more. We swam in creeks until we knew every turn, each deep pool, turtle, water spider and snake. When it rained, we rolled in wet mud, and slid in the gullies that filled with rainwater. We washed our hair under the roof gutters. And we counted time by the four o'clocks that she planted.

We explored the complexities and corridors of newly developed underground water drainage pipes being installed in our neighborhood as if they were our own cities. We sat for hours in haylofts and swung from the pulleys on the rafters. We jumped off our barn, and climbed on our home's steep roof. We ran under our horse, and hid between our neighbor's milking cows. We could daydream in these places. We lived fully and came home hungry.

These days I long to see more children running barefoot, dirty, and carefree. But at every turn, it feels as though so many of the constraints that have been put into place for child welfare serve only to create a pattern of mothering that shouts, “No!”

This shortsighted approach points out the dangers of each plant, cliff, and route rather than encouraging wonder. A simple walk can turn into a stressful session of “Hurry up!” “Stay on the path,” and “Don’t touch that!” Such legalistic pressures create a *disconnect* from the bounty of Mother Earth and they *dishonor* our intuitive mothering skills. They say to children, “Beware” rather than “Be awed. “

For me, honoring my mother means reconnecting with the earth, this grand and glorious mother who sustains each one of us as special guests at her immaculate table. I long to feel it again—all of it—the worms beneath my bare feet, the clover ripe with nectar for honey, the cool waters of the creek under the shade of the maple tree, the rocks that were always in my pocket.

And while it would be easy to provide the legalistic list, the ten commandments of honoring our earth—recycle, reduce, reuse, grow your own, go organic, quit wanting so much stuff!—the simple truth is, I want to say, “Want more!”

Want more vistas that aren’t marred by gray haze, styrofoam, or noise pollution. Want more to eat that is not flecked with ingredients that are man-made or packaged beyond recognition. Want your grandchildren and theirs to remember the feel of dirt in their hands, in their toes and definitely in their mouths. Want to feel free to wander this earth just to see what might be found quivering with life underneath the rock, bursting with color and light within the deep bud of the flower, and gleaming beneath the water’s surface.

And for our mothers, let us want the same—to always seek the depths within her heart without fear of, “No.” Take your mother for a walk outside, or bring what is outside in to her. Either way, there is honor for her there. 🌱