



Resilient and Remarkable

Mom's Journey of Strength and Joy

You can learn a lot about a person — and learn a lot from them — by how they handle the tough times.

My mother, Linda, is the type of person you never hear complain. A devout Christian and a deeply caring and giving soul, she has spent her nearly 80 years on this earth shining a positive light on life's challenges and focusing on all the good things that make the journey worthwhile. The most inspiring aspect of my mom's life is that she's had every reason to look at the world differently than she does.

At just 10 years old, she lost her mom in a car accident. At that point, she had to help raise her 1-year-old sister — a role she took by the horns. When my grandfather remarried and the family expanded, she became the big sister to her new siblings.

My mom had to learn about survival — fast. In addition to becoming a fantastic cook, she had to master a slew of general life skills simply to keep life moving. No matter the situation, she grasped the task at hand with positivity and care. It's little surprise that she later enjoyed a career as a home economics teacher, touching young women's lives for decades while teaching them the fundamentals of doing things independently.

My mom's strength and spirit shone brightly when she married my dad, Wayne — who later became a high school principal — and started a family. My little sister Shannon and I grew up in a little brick rancher that my parents had built in Mechanicsville, a wonderful community that always felt more like an extended family. We weren't wealthy, but Mom would always say that, in her opinion, we were rich.



When I started my firm many years later, I had plenty of ambition but little money. My mom asked who would be helping me. When I answered, "Nobody," she immediately said, "Well, I'll be your secretary!" For months, she'd come in several days a week to keep things filed and help me maintain the beginnings of my business. Although I've since built a successful firm with a great staff, Mom's influence still



drives everything I do. Whenever I have a bad day or face a situation that's not going my way, thinking of my Mom's journey helps me put things into perspective and keeps me plugging ahead.

During my childhood years, I remember my Mom as the person who kept our household running smoothly — from doing the finances to preparing meals to keeping the house in order — she did it all with a great attitude and grace. But another gift Mom had was a knack for crafts and creating things with her hands. Not too long ago, I found an article from our local newspaper from the late '70s on an award Mom received for some crafts she had done.

In the ensuing years, Mom never stopped being optimistic and hopeful — even when we lost Dad at the all-too-young age of 53. Just as she had done when she was 10, she put her life back together, marrying a great man named Vince D'Agostino and finding new happiness.

As a grown man with his own family, I marvel at how deeply we feel my mom in our everyday lives. I love to cook, while my sister, Shannon, continues the family tradition of teaching by working as an art teacher. My daughter Sarah Ann, a fabulous artist as well, seems to have inherited Mom's knack for creativity. She is pursuing her master's degree in architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Without Mom, we wouldn't be the people we are.

Happy Mother's Day, Mom! You will always be at the top of my list of heroes.

—Kevin Mottley

When Laughing Was Scandalous

Outrageous Etiquette Rules From the Past

Etiquette has always been an ever-changing game, but some rules from the past are so bizarre that it's hard to believe anyone actually followed them. From mandatory gloves to rain-soaked gentlemen, let's take a trip back in time and appreciate just how far we've come in the world of social graces.

Imagine being a Victorian woman at a fancy gathering. You spot someone across the room and want to strike up a conversation — but wait! **If you weren't spoken to first, you had to stay silent.** Initiating conversation could ruin your social standing because heaven forbid a woman had an independent thought. And if you did manage to chat with someone, you had better keep your laughter under control. **Women were expected to cover their mouths when laughing** because too much joy was unacceptable.

Speaking of controlling appearances, let's talk about the ultimate fashion injustice — men and umbrellas. In 18th-century England, **a man carrying an umbrella was seen as weak.** A true gentleman had to brave the rain with a stiff upper lip and a soggy coat. Meanwhile, women had their own list of fashion do's and don'ts. Gloves? Mandatory. Hair up at all times? Absolutely. When crossing the street, **a lady could only lift her dress with one hand** because lifting with two hands was just too scandalous and might show off too much ankle.

Photographs were another place where emotions were strictly off-limits. **Smiling in photos was considered undignified**, and people had to remain as serious as possible. So, if you've ever wondered why your great-great-grandparents looked like they just lost a bet in every old photograph, now you know!

Fast forward to the 1960s, and while some rules relaxed, others remained oddly specific. Holding your drink in your right hand at a party? Absolutely not! **Your right "social" hand had to stay free to shake hands and light cigarettes.** And **if you were a dinner guest, you had better prepare a toast** — because nothing says party etiquette like being put on the spot for an impromptu speech.

So, the next time you see someone laughing freely or using an umbrella without shame, take a moment to appreciate just how much times have changed!



MEDIATION VS. ARBITRATION

A MATTER OF METHOD

Because words *always* matter in law, I'd like to focus on two that are often critical to a case's outcome but frequently confused.

In my work handling personal injury cases, I often go through a process called **mediation**. Conducted mainly by the plaintiff and defendant voluntarily, it is a way for both parties to attempt to discuss their differences to arrive at a resolution — typically a settlement — as an alternative to a trial. A mediator presides over the session as a go-between, and it is their job to hear what each side has to say — for example, if either side demands money or makes a compensatory offer — and advise each side on how to make a deal. Mediators are entirely neutral with no bias toward either side of a dispute, putting them in a unique position to chart a path toward a fair conclusion.

Mediators are typically well-known in their communities (and thus in high demand), and their selection is generally one element of a case that both sides agree upon. These days, virtually

all personal injury cases I handle go through a mediation process. If you're a client, you can expect to go through one at some point during your case. From my experience, at least 80% of cases are resolved this way — without ever going to trial.

Conversely, **arbitration** — a process in which one or more arbitrators are hired to hear evidence presented by both parties and then decide the winner — is traditionally less collaborative and more adversarial than mediation. For arbitration to occur, both parties must agree to specific criteria. For example, an agreement could stipulate that the arbitrator must come from a particular organization or that a panel of three arbitrators must be utilized.

Please contact us if you would like more information on mediation and arbitration, or guidance on which option may be best suited for your case.

—Kevin Mottley



Fierce Flames, Fearless Friends

A SALUTE TO FIREFIGHTERS

Many young boys dream of becoming firefighters when they grow up, and I was no exception.

Think about it. How extraordinary must you be to put your life and safety on the line to save others under the most dangerous and harrowing circumstances? Although my adult life and career took a much different path, my deep respect and appreciation for firefighters and all they do to protect their communities has never wavered. With May 4 being International Firefighters' Day, I hope you'll join me in thinking of and honoring the many full-time or professional heroes who withstand the heat to keep our homes and families safe. Here are some facts and thoughts to help you celebrate.

BRAVERY BY THE NUMBERS

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, more than 27,000 registered fire departments exist nationwide. These operations thrive through the dedication of nearly 1.1 million career, per-call, or volunteer firefighters. Of that number, 52% are volunteers — an astonishing and admirable figure made even more impressive considering that more than 70% of our fire personnel in Virginia devote time to carrying out their duties without pay.

COMMUNITY-BASED COMPASSION

The life of a firefighter involves more than responding to emergencies — it entails educating the public. Serving its community since 1858, the Richmond Fire Department is actively engaged in various community-based activities aimed at helping students, friends, and neighbors be safer citizens. For more than 40 years, the Department has been educating fifth graders through its Fire Safety Education Program (FSEP). Comprised of a written pretest, four classroom presentations, two homework assignments, and a written post-test, FSEP has served more than 60,000 Richmond Public Schools students to date.

On International Firefighters' Day and every day, let's take the time to thank every person who puts on their turnout gear and risks everything to help others — and may children forever look at them with admiration and wonder.

—Kevin Mottley

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SUDOKU



Slow Cooker Shredded Beef Lettuce Cups

Inspired by TasteOfHome.com

INGREDIENTS

- 1 boneless beef chuck roast (about 2 lbs)
- 3 medium carrots, peeled, chopped
- 2 medium sweet red peppers, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 8-oz can unsweetened crushed pineapple, undrained
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tbsp packed brown sugar
- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 3 tbsp cornstarch
- 3 tbsp water
- 24 lettuce leaves for serving

DIRECTIONS

1. In 4- or 5-quart slow cooker, combine roast, carrots, peppers, and onion.
2. In small bowl, stir together the next 6 ingredients; pour over roast.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6–8 hours. Remove roast, let cool slightly, then shred.
4. Skim fat from cooking juices, then transfer juices and vegetables to a small saucepan; bring to a boil over high heat.
5. In a small bowl, combine cornstarch and water, stir mixture into juices, and cook 3–4 minutes until sauce is thickened.
6. Return beef, sauce, and vegetables to slow cooker; cook for 10–15 minutes.
7. Serve beef in lettuce leaves.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- 1 Dignity and Devotion
- 2 Etiquette or Absurdity? The Most Ridiculous Social Rules From History
Direct Paths to Dispute Decisions
- 3 Hail to Our Heroes
Slow Cooker Shredded Beef Lettuce Cups
- 4 Your Dream Lawn Is Within Reach

THE ENVY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Try These Simple Lawn Care Hacks

Some say the grass is always greener on the other side, but it doesn't have to be! While this adage has a deeper philosophical meaning about perspective, it can also apply to our actual grass. How often have you looked at a neighbor's lawn and wondered what they did to make it appear green and lush? Many of us have been envious of someone else's lawn at one point, but turning your lawn into a picture-perfect paradise is easier than you might imagine with these three strategies!

DON'T MOW TOO LOW!

One of the biggest mistakes homeowners make when trying to keep their lawns tidy is mowing too low. They think they won't have to do it as often if they mow lower. While this is true, you're actively preventing your grass from being as healthy as possible. Cutting your grass short creates stress and reduces its density, creating the perfect breeding ground for invasive weeds. Common weeds like crabgrass depend on sunlight to grow. Leaving your grass at a higher length will prevent these

weeds from getting much-needed sunlight. Ideally, you want to cut your grass so it's between 2–4 inches tall.

DON'T DROWN YOUR LAWN!

Grass needs water to survive, so it should thrive if we give it an overabundance, right? Overwatering your grass damages the root system by depriving it of oxygen and key nutrients. Over time, your grass will weaken and become the perfect home for pests and fungi. Instead, you should provide your lawn with around 1 inch of water weekly. Most lawns will need about 20 minutes of watering 3–4 times per week to receive the proper amount.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE SOIL!

You need more than just dirt and water to make your lawn stand out from the rest. Adding a layer of weed-free compost will give your lawn the organic matter and microorganisms it needs to remain healthy. In most cases, you won't even need to fertilize if your lawn has a solid layer of healthy soil.

