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**Mom deserves her "somewhere" this Sunday**

By Curtis Seltzer

BLUE GRASS, Va.—Mothers have it hard.

Seventy-three percent of mothers with children under 18 also work outside the home, according to Women Employed, a Chicago-based advocacy organization.

Motherhood falls heaviest on mothers, as you might expect. Working moms wrestle the tag team of competing work-home obligations every day. Working dads generally get a break on childcare and homemaking, because working mothers don't.

It's hard to find the time and energy to mother kids and simultaneously tend to work, spouse, career, self and community. Even when women carry this off, it's not done without conflict, unease and costs.

While juggling these balls is tricky for working mothers who have another adult to lend a hand, it's even trickier for 9.2 million single moms. Doing a passable job alone is an extraordinary achievement. Single mothers get blamed a lot and don't get enough praise when they make it work.

In the long run, mothering is the most important job mothers do, and it's the same for fathers and fathering. You don't hear moms or dads in their 50s lamenting that they didn't spend enough time with their employer's spread sheets when their kids were young.

Parenting is an easy corner to cut when the pressure's on. The intention of spending make-up time in the future is an easy rationale, and one I've used. I've known moms who left work each day at 5 p.m. to pick up their kids when coworkers stayed until 7. Every choice costs something.

I listened many years ago to the argument that "quality time" made up for short time. It isn't true. Every important conversation I had with my daughter when she was little occurred when we were doing nothing important, aside from spending time with each other, which is what is important.

I have known single mothers with kids who had awful diseases like cerebral palsy and cystic fibrosis, or psychological issues like depression and schizophrenia, or addictions or jail time. They rose to these demands. Dads, I've known, less so, with exceptions. Sometimes a grandparent had to step up and step in.

Norman Rockwell did not paint motherhood as it is.

The United States officially recognized the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day in 1914 due to the effort of Anna Jarvis, born in Webster, W.Va., a tiny Baltimore & Ohio Railroad junction near Grafton where she grew up.

She started her campaign to honor all mothers after hers died in 1907. Her mother, Ann, had nursed soldiers from both sides during the Civil War and organized clubs to promote community health and safety. Eight of her 12 children died before reaching adulthood.

To Anna's despair, the selling of cards, flowers, jewelry and candy quickly and overwhelmingly commercialized the day she'd dedicated to honor mothers. She would agree with the current dismissive name for her creation, "Hallmark Holiday."

Anna never married and was childless. She spent her final years using her inheritance to campaign against the business hijacking of her life's work. She died blind and penniless, the mother -- in her own mind -- of a Frankenstein.

So how should mothers be honored on Mother's Day, a celebration conceived in idealism and now bedded with pitchmen for sappiness and sweets?

Frankly, I'm not the first person I would ask for this answer. So I consulted the only mother in

residence, my wife, Melissa, who suggested that “we go somewhere.” It’s worth noting that she didn’t suggest that I should go somewhere.

After decades of marital bliss, I now know that Melissa’s idea of “somewhere” and mine differ. I would, for example, go to New Hampshire where we could make a fire in August just like at home. She would go to a beach where 100-degree evenings are considered brisk.

I rummaged through my sparse inventory of mutually agreeable “somewheres” with no luck. Then inspiration hit.

I would find a B&B that featured horseback riding, her favorite activity. This was a better choice, I figured, than a B&B that featured legal wrangling, her least favorite activity. She could spend the weekend walking and trotting, and I would make conversation with other orphaned horse husbands.

So this weekend we are clippity-clopping to Virginia’s horse country. Melissa will take English lessons to improve the syntax of her horse whispers. I’ve promised to not make low-life cracks about Britain’s royal family, which seems to be able to bring off only weddings and funerals and nothing in between.

Moms should be celebrated for all they do and for giving their kids the benefit of many doubts. They love us, even when we’re not likeable.

For those reasons, I keep two pictures of my mother, Rena, in my office where I check in at least once a day.

Whatever we do on Sunday is not enough, but Hallmark has persuaded us that it’s the thought that counts—as long as it’s expressed in a \$4 card.

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