

Dancing With Mom



The year was 1943. Being only a little tad the young boy concerned himself mostly with the business of eating, sleeping and voiding his system. His regular routine was a midday nap in the quiet of the early afternoon so he was somewhat surprised to be woken by the sound of softly playing music.

Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes and returning to the here and now he followed the sounds to the living room where for the first time he saw his mother dancing. There was his Mom all alone dancing to a song coming from the big radio that dominated the room.

Watching her gracefully move and sway to the music brought a big smile to his face. He had never seen his Mother move so magically before. She never noticed him and he sat there enjoying the way she changed her steps to the different tunes.

That became his daily routine he would wake from his nap at the first sounds of music, toddle off to the living room where he would sit down and watch his mother dance all alone in the empty apartment. One day she bent down and held her hands out for him to join her. Holding him gently she unsuccessfully tried to guide him from tripping and stepping all over her feet. Her smile told him she didn't seem to mind his complete lack of rhythm and coordination.

There was never any criticism or complaints about his clumsiness, His mom never became frustrated with his lack of coordination. The two of them would just laugh and dance in the empty apartment.

When WW2 ended he saw his father and mother dance together for the first time which was a real treat for his mother. Like most of the men in the family his father wasn't much of a dancer and really didn't care to learn. It brought a smile to the boy's face to see them dancing together and life was good

As a teenager when he had girlfriends of his own his mom freely relinquished her place as his dance partner. If by chance the band played her favorite song, "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller, he would seek her out and they would laugh and dance just like they used to back in their old apartment.

The family suffered a major blow in 1962, when at only 51 years of age his father's heart gave out and the darkness of depression wormed its way into his mother's life. Her hazel eyes lost their sparkle and turned a shade of gray, her quick and ready smile not so quick and ready anymore

A year or so passed and they were all at a wedding where the reception was just starting. As at most affairs of that type the band was playing to an empty dance floor. People were always somewhat reticent to be the first couple up on the floor.

The boy, a man now, bowed and asked his Mother if she would honor him with a dance. They walked to the center of the empty dance floor and the band broke out in a rendition of Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." She threw her head back and laughed, they danced just like they were back in their old apartment. When the song ended she smiled at him and said "You asked them for that didn't you?" He smiled back "Just wanted to see if you still had it Ma he replied," And she did.

Years went by, it was now 1984 and the man was standing in the doorway of the large dayroom once again. The deep sadness was always there as he looked around at the sad reality of life, stark white walls contrasting with the dark green of the floor tiles, the smell of antiseptic barely covering up the odor of urine. The man stared at his mother sitting at a table with a bunch of other older women. They were all in their own worlds, mostly staring off in the distance. One woman was busy smoothing out an imaginary napkin on the table over and over as she did every day he was there. The TV was blaring away in the corner; no-one paying much attention to it.

She showed no sign of recognition or acknowledgement as he sat down next to her. Music was playing softly from a radio in the back of the room when unexpectedly, the sounds of Glenn Millers "In the Mood" poured out. It was like a switch had been

thrown, his mother immediately looked at him as if he had suddenly just arrived. He swore he could see the hazel pushing its way through the gray in her eyes and there was the slightest hint of a smile on her face.

Holding his hands out for her to join him, he thought he saw a glimmer of recognition. Putting her arms around him, his mother rose from the chair.

Slowly taking one step then another they danced around the floor while the nurses and staff watched. She smiled at him just like she used to back when they danced in their old apartment. He wished Mr. Glenn Miller had played that song for hours instead of minutes, but that was not to be. As the song ended and he led his mother back to her chair the switch had been thrown back. The gray quickly replaced the sparkle in her eyes slowly dimming any recognition. She looked at him as if wondering who he was and what he wanted from her. The nurses and staff all came over saying nice words to them but the moment had fled.

I felt sad and had a heavy heart until the realization set in that I had been the recipient of a wonderful gift, the gift of a step back in time, a time when my mother and I would laugh and dance around our living room to Mr. Glenn Miller's "In the Mood."

The End