



HEART WARMERS

On being “Hard Headed”

Did your mom or grandma ever say, “You are one hard-headed child!” ? Did they ever shake their heads at you when you were being obstinate or refused to put your coat on before going outside when it was 46 degrees? Did you ever defiantly walk home from school when you missed the bus because you were told you’d have to wait until someone could pick you up? (wait, I don’t know anyone who ever did that).

Did your Mom ever curse you by saying, “I hope you grow up and have one just like you”?

Then you can join the world’s largest unofficial club. The “Hard-Headed Club”.

I think for those of us who don this quasi-affectionate epithet rarely took it as an insult. After all, if it applied to us, then there was no denying it. We simply did things our way and didn’t take “No” for an answer, and rolled along and over just about anything that stood in our way. As kids, it was just a given that we were going to find another way to get things done, come hell or high water.

And I think that it’s not something we contemplate too much about in being hard-headed during our adolescence...until the day that we realize one irreversible and undeniable truth about the curse our mothers gave us:

We have a child who is just like us.

I’m convinced that life is by far the best teacher. And when we thought that we knew it all about parenting, or we were just rocking along with that first-born who was the compliant little angel. Here comes Johnny.

And the sad truth to me is that I should have seen it coming. From the second that child was born, he fought being held. He never walked; he ran everywhere he went. Doggedly determined, set on forcing that square peg into the round hole. No one could tell him a thing.

But I’m also realizing that there are signs of something emerging that I hadn’t seen before. Evidence of a new mutated gene within the hard-headedness that the compliant child has not even mastered yet; grit.

I can count on my hands the number of struggles and adversities, waves of pain and trauma that have knocked him down. But the defiant little sucker refuses to stay down. And I used to see it in my students as well, and wondered how they were able to overcome so many challenges and still keep their eyes focused on the horizon, dead set to finish the race when there was every single reason for them to quit.

I now believe that sometimes defiance is the precursor to the grit necessary to survive in life. And the students I thought to be most challenging turned out to be the most stable and steadfast of adults, working hard, and staying committed to their homes and families. Nothing keeps them down.

So take heart in the ring-tailed tooters of today and remember the ones you knew from the past. You never know when you might run across one that gives you a great big hug and tells you tales of a 3-year-old who is paying back every cent on the dollar for years of their own salty ruggedness.

I’m going to be a little more thankful for mine as well.

After all, I can’t completely fault him for the vinegar in his blood.

I know exactly where he gets it from.