

Come; join me on another trip through Memory Lane.

Mom's Aprons

This came across our screen, sent by my friend, Carol Jean. It set me to thinking about my mom and her aprons, too. Below is the story and I will follow it with a few of my own memories:

Grandma's Aprons

The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served a variety of uses in her household duties. Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron. And it was a handy holder for removing pans or pies, hot from the oven.

Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove. And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After peas had been shelled it carried out the hulls. In the fall it was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

From the chicken-coop the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids. They were wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion were even used for cleaning out dirty ears.

At noon Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds!

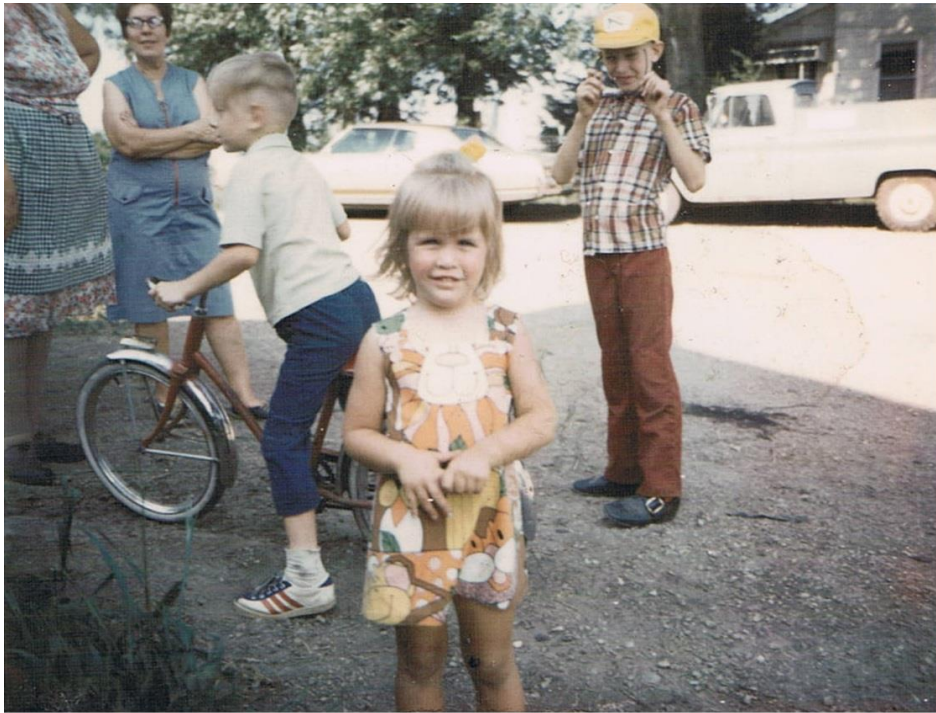
It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that "old-time apron" which served so many purposes.

Oh, such memories that story brings to the surface! For as long as I can remember, aprons were a part of Mom's and my lives. You must understand, there were different aprons for different occasions.

"Good" aprons were only used when company was coming. These were sewn from new fabric (sometimes from chicken feed sacks!) and trimmed with lace or rick rack, maybe even boasting a fancy pocket. I can still picture the three matching aprons worn by Mom, Grandma Pieper, and me for holidays. They were blue and white with a border of blue ducks and smocking along the bottom. Found in the vast assortment of my "stuff", here is a picture of the three of us in those aprons.



Oh, and these aprons were called "half-aprons" because they only protected your skirt. Often Mom took along one of her "good" aprons when we were invited to a meal at someone else's home. (See my mom with her apron in the picture below.)



Really high style was when you sewed an apron from the same fabric as your newest dress!



Bib aprons were the norm for general housework. These covered the top of your dress, as well as your skirt. Generally, these were recycled from “good” dresses that had worn out or were too faded to wear for visiting neighbors or relatives. See *my great grandma Alvina Pieper with her bib apron below:*



(Mom grew up in Nebraska in the early 1900's and often told of having just one woolen dress for school in the winter. That dress was washed about once a month but she was required to wear aprons to keep from getting it dirty.)

The next step down were the aprons worn for outside work, such as weeding the garden or planting flowers.



These confections were fashioned from “everyday dresses” that had gotten too patched for even respectable everyday wear. Some of them may, at one time in the past, have been “good” dresses that escaped the apron-phase of their usefulness. (See *picture of Mom below in one of her “work” aprons.*)



The final class of aprons was used when cleaning out the chicken house, gathering hay or straw bales, scrubbing out milk buckets, or tearing down old buildings. They were designed from Dad's worn-out bib overalls and were patched over patches. Occasionally, a bit of whimsy was added with a decoration of faded rickrack or lace ripped from an old dress.



At the other end of the scale was the apron worn when you helped serve at a wedding reception or anniversary open house. It always amazed me that something made of netting or lace and ribbons was expected to protect your dress. It was the responsibility of the person of honor to supply all of their helpers with fancy aprons so you always had a lovely selection of these useless garments.

The ladies in the picture below (Mayme Manke, Mildred Plautz, Rosa Suess, Janette Plautz, Sylvia Suess, and Joyce Bull) were serving punch and cake at a wedding in 1961 and they all wore their fancy organdy aprons.



Don't you just know little girls had roughly the same selection of aprons and it was unheard-of to ever place a child at a table without that kid being covered from head to toe with a humongous tent.

When I was a freshman in high school, one of the first projects in Home Ec was to sew a cobbler's apron for class cooking events. Mine was a blue plaid one and a piece of it shows up in my "Graduation Quilt"

When I married, Mom and Grandma made sure I had an ample supply of aprons for any occasion imaginable but I do not believe I ever wore any of them out.

When Mom's grandkids arrived on the scene, Mom was a flurry of activity, first sewing bibs, and then kids' cover-all aprons. *Yup, that's the aprons drying below on the rack beside the Siegler oil heater in 1966 (with Sandi) at the Florence Road house.*



There were special ones at Mom's house for when the kids visited her and others at home for everyday use. Two of them were white terry cloth with roosters and chickens.

Aprons remained an integral part of Mom's existence. In 1987, despite her battle with cancer, she continued to cook meals for herself and Dad, rolling between her stove and cupboards in her wheelchair. And then, one day she took off her apron for the last time. She left us a few weeks later.

Life went on and aprons became a thing of the past. I suspect daughter-in-law Ellen is the only family member who even owns an apron. (She is a gourmet cook.) When I left Illinois, I found those two "rooster aprons" in my "stuff" and brought them along to Virginia. Just ONCE I tried to talk my own grandkids into wearing those aprons at my table.



They informed me that they were NOT BABIES! and refused to wear them for more than a minute. Never mind! I have them packed away in my dresser drawer because they are a link to my five little blondes and I sometimes get them out just to reminisce. Someday my kids will need to clean out my belongings and will ditch them. Until then, THEY STAY PUT!