



Thankful for Things Left

UNSAID

By Carol G. Stratton

In this time of Thanksgiving, we often reflect on the kindness of people in our lives. We look back on the encouraging and inspiring things that friends and loved ones have spoken to us, and we treasure them. I'd like to write about the kindness of little things that were left unsaid. I'm often grateful for those who keep their mouth closed, and only think what they might have said. Sometimes not hearing something encourages us more.

I'm grateful for:

The teachers who never questioned me on Back to School Night as to why my daughter wore one black and one red high top tennis shoe. (Who knew it was an eighth grade act of rebellion?).

The music professor who never said, "I don't think you have it, Roth." to me, a struggling voice student. (However, once she did shout out, "I didn't think you had it in you, 'Roth.'" when I finally hit my musical stride.)

The newlywed husband who never commented on the chest of drawers I painted a hideous bright coral color.

The newlywed husband who never disdained the hideous turquoise and yellow rug I hooked for two years to go with the coral colored furniture.

The husband who painfully, but silently, endured taste-testing strange gourmet recipes containing eggplant I thought to be

nouvelle cuisine. (He thought they were nouvelle horrible.)

My employer who didn't ask me why I handed her an application for another company when applying for work. She even went on to hire me.

Our orthodontist's staff member who didn't snicker when I rescheduled my daughter's appointment for the fifth time. If I were her, I'd have blurted out a patronizing comment like, "Now Mrs. Stratton, are you sure you can make this date? Do you have a pen to write this down?"

Finally, I'm grateful for a family that believes in leaving some things unsaid. With a writing career paved with rejection slips, I've had moments when I whine and complain. Fortunately I've been blessed with a supportive family. Many times they might have asked, "Why are you still writing?" They didn't. They kept their comments on "mute" and, good or bad, I'm still at it.

Maybe this Thanksgiving you and I can reflect on those who had the good sense to keep their mouths closed. We salute those who bit their tongue when we looked "uncool," "foolish," or "lacking in taste." In our culture, we undervalue kindness and self control, two character traits that smooth over our interactions with people. Full disclosure is good for financial statements, but rough on relationships. Better to leave things unsaid. Down the road, someone will thank you for it. **FW**

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