



Mother -In- Love

M.W. Story 24

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Written for: Kay Smith



Kay pictured with her husband (George), oldest son (Hannes), and 3 grandchildren.

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If you're lucky enough to know Mama Kay, you know she has one of the biggest hearts, a soul as sweet as honey (with a hint of spicy), and some of the tastiest, flavor-packed cooking around. Kay is technically my "mother-in-law", but a few years ago she started referring to me as her daughter-in-love, and it's a much better description of our relationship. Over the past 12 years, I have learned so much from her as she continues to share stories of her journey as wife, mother, and career woman.

Kay, and her husband, George, jump at any opportunity to support our family despite living 5 hours away. Their love and involvement includes last minute babysitting overnights, thoughtful gifts at holiday gatherings, special one-on-one shopping trips, and always bringing lots of Wisconsin cheese and goodies on their visits. When Hannes and I wanted to run Ragnar Relay, she and George agreed to help watch our three kids including a toddler who still doesn't sleep well – not an easy feat! She didn't judge or question our decision (or sanity) to partake in the event. Kay understands the need to be both a parent and an individual and that sometimes being an individual means time away from the kids. The whole running through the night, well that's a little questionable. Ha!

Naturally, we have some differences in parenting approaches, but I sure do love her and appreciate her role in our family. Kay is extremely perceptive, intelligent, and perseverant. She has a mental library full of stories that never ceases to amaze me. She has overcome many challenges, sees people for who they are, and sets no boundaries when it comes to caring for others.

Kay's mothering extends far beyond her three grown sons and three active grandkids, to anyone that is in need of a little guidance and whole lot of love. She works diligently in the Academic Success Center at the University of Dubuque: a job which she pours extra love and energy into as she genuinely cares about the students and their success. Perhaps one of her greatest gifts is being able to put herself in someone else's shoes, anticipating their needs, and finding a good balance between encouragement and comfort and establishing structure and guidelines.

I've heard stories about how Kay was invited to attend graduation by previous students, about how she brings in special snacks if a student with special dietary needs will be testing that day, and how she received flowers at the ends of a semester from a parent because Kay went above and beyond in helping their son achieve goals. The examples go on and on. Hannes explains that similar experiences occurred during his upbringing. His mom and their home were a welcoming place to be loved and encouraged without judgement. What a gift you are to the world, Kay! Thank you and may you continue to know the immeasurable value you bring to our family and countless others.