

# STANDARD DEVIATIONS: Salute to Mom

Today's newsletter is a reprint from last year. I have two reasons: 1) it's the real story of Mother's Day and has a basis in biosafety, and 2) there are a lot of new readers looking at this, many of whom are mothers, who might appreciate the story. Enjoy.

Salutations and Greetings,

I hope your Mother's Day was enjoyable, but do you know the real story? We've been celebrating Mother's Day in the U.S. for just over 100 years; Woodrow Wilson made the second Sunday of May the national day of recognition, Mother's Day, in 1914. Interestingly, the holiday is actually tribute to a **biosafety** effort of the Civil War era!

**Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis** (1832-1905) is acknowledged as the inspiration of our Mother's Day. She worked as a social activist and organizer to improve health and sanitary conditions for her community. She lived in the area of Pennsylvania and Virginia where the abolitionist debate influenced the creation of West Virginia. Her work provided assistance and education for reducing disease and infant mortality in the 1850s. She developed and promoted milk inspections before state requirements. Through church and women's clubs, she aided families with mothers suffering from tuberculosis. During the war, her woman's clubs declared neutrality and cared for soldiers of both North and South armies when typhoid fever and measles outbreaks occurred. After the war, in 1868, Jarvis organized a "Mothers' Friendship Day," at which mothers gathered with former Union and Confederate soldiers to promote reconciliation.





**Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis**



Her daughter (**Anna Jarvis**) honored her mother as a message of unity and reconciliation for veterans, sending 500 white carnations to memorial attendees May 10, 1908. The event rapidly grew in popularity, spreading across many states and countries and ratified by President Wilson in 1914.

Although she endorsed the holiday recognition, initially, Jarvis was adamantly opposed to the exploitation that followed. Commercial industries soon recognized the marketability in Jarvis' sentimental celebration of motherhood. Her themes became central to Mother's Day advertising campaigns. Her call to write tribute letters fueled the greeting card industry. Hallmark soon issued the first captioned sentiments in a card. The designation of the white carnation emblem energized the floral industry. Despite her calls to the nation to adopt her holiday, Jarvis considered it her intellectual and legal property, and not part of the public domain. She wished for Mother's Day to remain a "holy day," to remind us of our debt to "the mother of quiet grace" who put the needs of her children before her own. She never intended for the observance to become the "burdensome, wasteful, expensive gift-day" that other holidays had become by the early 20th century.





Jarvis' attacks on the commercialization of Mother's Day became legendary. Media sources chronicled her public condemnations of those she denounced as copyright infringers, trade vandals, and blatant profiteers. In 1922, Jarvis endorsed an open boycott against the florists who raised the price of white carnations every May. The following year, she crashed a retail confectioner convention to protest the industry's economic gouging of the day. In 1925, she interrupted a national convention of the American War Mothers in Philadelphia because she believed the majority of the money raised by the organization's white carnation sales went into the pockets of professional organizers rather than going to aid World War I veterans. She died broken and penniless fighting with boycotts and lawsuits the commercial gold mine of flowers, candies and gift cards. Her last years were lived in a Philadelphia sanatorium where she died in 1948. The cost of her residence there was funded by a group of florists.

So, the Mother's Day we celebrate today really began as a remembrance of Ann Jarvis' dedication in the Civil War, giving aid to soldiers battling infectious disease, regardless of their allegiance, and her efforts toward the reconciliation of a nation divided.

Britain has centuries-old Mothering Sunday (4th Sunday of Christian Lent). Panama observes March 21 when the Catholic Church honors another famous mother, the Virgin Mary. Thailand mothers are celebrated August 12, the birthday for Queen Sirikit (since 1956). Today, many countries celebrate the second Sunday of May – including Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia and Belgium.



This year Americans will average \$162.94 on mom. Hallmark Cards notes that 133 million cards are exchanged (3rd behind Christmas and Valentine's) and it is second only to Christmas for gift giving.

You should honor your mother with **every** chance or memory you can and remember this Mother's Day as a tribute to peace and caring towards all in the face of war and disease.

Have a great week and be safe.

Bryan

p.s. Next week we're back to work.

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