OPINION

COLUMNS

Falling rain means personal growth

CATHY KRAFVE

Checklist Charlie

It is raining today as a write.

It is a beautiful, drippy rain that gently announces springtime has arrived in East Texas.

The sky is my favorite light-soaked gray that spotlights all the vibrant greens and pinks, as if nature is declaring in triumph that new growth is pushing up yet again.

I'm glad it is raining today, even though I was thankful for the window of sunshine that appeared in perfect timing for my firstborn's outdoor wedding.

The rain fits my mood.

"It's a lot like childbirth all over again," whispered a dear friend as I stared off vacantly in a momentary lull at the reception. There was laughter all around me, but I wasn't paying attention until she leaned in to whisper her encouragement.

I snapped back to reality.

"I didn't expect it to hurt this much," I whispered, looking deeply into my friend's eyes, soaking up her compassion as she nodded with understanding.

Each time I gave birth to my children I purposely stayed at the hospital an extra day to heal.

I knew once they loaded me into that wheelchair and pushed me out the front door, that I would be the caretaker of that delightful little bundle.

I needed to be ready.

I figure waving goodbye to your firstborn as she happily skips away holding the hand of her beloved qualifies as one of those rewards in life that requires astonishing courage.

So, I'm taking the day off today.

Tomorrow, I will wake up, put on my game face, focus my attention on eternity, and get back in the game of life.

I will focus a thankful heart on the small blessings that happen each moment for the person who is paying attention.

Tomorrow, I will drop my son off at school and holler out the window as I drive away, "You are the best boy in the whole world!"

I will interview my friend who made planning a wedding and a reception a piece of cake; a delicious, three-tiered white cake with a hand-painted topper of the bride and groom, to be exact.

I will call another friend who is planning her daughter's wedding, and I will ask if her bride has chosen her colors yet.

I will give my friend the heads-up on what the process will cost her emotionally.

I will pack my suitcase for a weekend away with the groom I chose almost 25 years ago.

Today, however, I am going to wrap a blanket around myself. I am going to reflect on the birthing process.

I am going to consider the difference between physical birth and emotionally letting go.

And I am going to watch it rain.

■

Cathy Primer Krafve, aka Checklist Charlie, lives in East Texas, where she grew up, married, and gave birth to all three of her children. She welcomes all comments at CaeKrafve2@aol.com.

Breaking the rules proves beneficial

ANTOINETTE JACKSON

Mangia! Mangia!

Going out to dinner on Friday night in the 1950's and early 60's was no fun for young Italian-American fish-eating Catholics like my friend Mary Ann Fiscella and me.

Even less enjoyable was going out to dinner to an Italian restaurant.

But I was in Chicago for just a short time for my cousin Prudy's wedding and I wanted to meet with my former Jones Commercial classmate.

"Mary Ann, you know better than eating out on Friday night when we have to eat fish. And an Italian place at that? Have you lost your mind?" I said jokingly.

"Sure, but there's this place on the South Side that serves the world's greatest linguini and clam sauce. Why don't we break the unwritten rules and go there?" she came back convincingly.

Two days later, Mary Ann and I were in a typical storefront mom-and-pop Italian restaurant.

We sat in a shiny red leather booth. Overhead plastic grapes dangled through wooden latticework.

A burning candle dripped hot wax down the side of a once-full Chianti bottle placed in the middle of a red and white tablecloth.

In the background, Musak piped out Enrico Caruso, Mario Lanza, Jerry Vale and Vic Damone crooning familiar Italian love songs.

While picking at our anti-pasto and waiting for the main course, we caught up on last nine years since our graduation and my subsequent move to Southern California.

"Toni, just about everyone in our class is already married. We're almost 30, and it looks like we're going to stay single the rest of our lives. We'd better be able to take care of our selves financially."

"Twenty-seven years-old isn't 30, Mar. And I'm having too much fun in my singles group to think about being a poverty-stricken old maid," I acknowledged.

Oblivious to the seriousness of our conversation, the waiter cleared the table of the anti-pasto dishes and brushed the crumbs from the tablecloth.

Then he set in front of us two huge plates of linguini, covered over with a sea of steaming clams and garnished with fresh chopped parsley.

I powdered my pasta with cheese, reached for the fork and waited to dig in.

Mary Ann raised her glass and said, "Here's to all the beautiful clams that gave their lives for this delicious meal."

"Saluti," I responded, clinking her glass.

I aimed my fork, rolled some pasta around it, scooped up a generous portion of clams, tasted and rolled my eyes.

"Wow. This is the best dish of mollusks I have ever eaten. You were right, Mar. I've got to learn how to cook this when I get home," I said spearing another mouthful.

"Nothing to it", Mary Ann answered. "Just garlic browned in olive oil, fresh clams, parsley, salt and pepper."

My high-school friend was right. Linguini with clam sauce was simple to prepare and when I got back home to my own kitchen in California I perfected the dish.

But in my mind I kept mulling over what Mary Ann said about taking better financial care of ourselves.

She could be right, I reasoned.

Maybe it was time to think about a career instead of just a job as a secretary.

In September 1966, I returned to school full time.

Three years later, at the age of 30, I finished the bachelor's degree I had begun back in Chicago 12 years earlier.

The next time Mary Ann and I got together was 1976 when I was in town for a business convention.

We met for dinner on a Saturday night at a downtown steak house.

In the lobby, we hugged and then introduced our husbands -- both named Bob -- to each other.

She was right about the clam sauce and supporting ourselves, but thank God she was wrong about the both of us remaining old maids.

Linguini with White Clam Sauce

This recipe uses canned clams. Traditionally, the best sauce is made with fresh clams when they are available.

1 / 2 pound linguini, cooked to just al dente

4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 tablespoons parsley, chopped

1 / 4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 6.5 ounce cans chopped clams, drained reserving liquid

1 / 4 cup white wine

While the pasta is cooking, prepare the clam sauce as follows.

In a large pan, sauté garlic in olive oil. Carefully stir in the parsley and ground pepper.

Add the clam juice and wine and bring it all to a boil.

Lower the heat and simmer for five to eight minutes until the liquid is reduced by half. Add the clams and simmer for another 2 to 3 minutes.

Drain the pasta, reserving some of the liquid.

Add the pasta to the pan with the clam sauce.

Cook together for another 2 or 3 minutes, adding some of the pasta water if it looks too dry. Do not over cook or clams will be tough.

Remove from heat and serve with grated Parmesan.

Serves four.

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Antoinette Jackson is a Bullard-area resident. You may reach her at Antojxn@aol.com.

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phone 903-894-9306 fax 903-894-9308
114 N. Houston Street, Suite 1, Bullard, Texas 75757

Bill Woodall
Publisher/Owner

Cheryl Wells
Advertising Director

Lori Mellinger
Editor

Kelly Griffith-Fields
News Writer

Dot West
Circulation

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TAKS Science Objective

Mass of Reactants	Mass of Productions
223.4 g Fe + 96.0 g O_2	? g Fe_2O_3
44.0 g C_3H_8 + 160.0 g O_2	132.0 g CO_2 + ? g H_2O
? NH_4NO_3	11.2 g H_2O + 13.8 g N_2O

Use the table above to answer the following question.

According to the third reaction in the table, what mass of ammonium nitrate is needed to form the products listed?

A 2.6 g

B 13.8 g

C 25.0 g

D 154.5 g

The answer will be published in next week's edition of the Bullard Banner New.

Last week's TAKS Science Objective answer is C.

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FOR PATIENTS WITH
HIP OR KNEE PAIN

Thursday, March 13, 2008
5:30 p.m.
HealthPark Plaza - 1327 Troup Hwy., Tyler
Speaker: Thomas B. Volatile, MD

Light Meal Provided

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