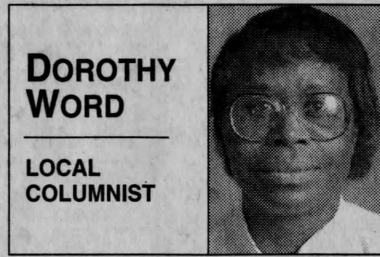


All kinds of 'mothers' should be honored

I was fairly certain that Mother's Day was a one-woman idea. **Wrong!** There were several people at different times and in different places with that exact same idea. Julia Ward Howe, best known for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (Mine eyes have seen the glory) suggested having a Mother's Day in the United States back in 1872. Mary T. Sasseen, a Kentucky schoolteacher, started conducting Mother's Day celebrations in 1887. A Hoosier, Frank E. Herling of South Bend, launched a campaign for Mother's Day in 1904. At the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1912, a resolution was introduced and adopted to recognize Anna Jarvis as the founder of Mother's Day.

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson was authorized by Congress to proclaim Mother's Day as an annual national observance.

I vehemently disagree with the mother-purists who insist that



Mother's Day belongs only to those females who actually go through the birthing process. Our society is replete with examples of women who never gave birth but mother-love and nurture children as well as anyone. Some women reach out beyond their birth children to others. Mother Clara Hale is a shining example. Mother of three, she also mothered more than 800 drug-addicted babies and their birth mothers at her House of Hope which she operated for more than 20 years in New York.

My favorite Mother's Day mother is Mary McLeod Bethune, who

birthed one son, Albert, but was mother to an incalculable number of students. By 1905, Bethune was teaching 100 students in her home which forced her to move to larger quarters. Her school later became an accredited high school, then a college. The Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church wanted to merge their school, Cookman, with Bethune's school. When she finally agreed, Bethune-Cookman College was born at Daytona Beach, Fla., in 1923.

Mary McLeod Bethune, a much honored woman, was named Mother of the Century in 1954. Evidently, many hundreds of her students concurred with that title since Bethune was addressed by many of them, down through the years, as "Mother Dear."

Sadly, there are many mothers for whom Mother's Day is forever altered by the death of a child through illness, accident or an act of violence. Famous mothers like Camille Cosby (son Ennis) or

unknown, ordinary mothers like my sister-in-law, Martha (son Ernest), or mothers of African-American history like Mamie Till Mobley (son Emmett Till).

For my good friends Ann, Irene, Elaine and Janice the joyous celebrations of Mother's Day are forever gone; replaced by guilt, frustration and fighting depression as they juggle their lives between caring for their families and being "mother" to their moms. Ann's mom is in a nursing home and has Alzheimer's. Irene's mom is debilitated from a series of strokes. Elaine's and Janice's moms are utterly dependent, demanding and forgetful, and insist on living alone; buying food they won't eat and clothes they forget to wear. Learning the role-reversals of daughters mothering mothers really requires "instructions included."

(Note: Dorothy Word is a retired history teacher from Evansville. She lives in Kokomo.)