

A Mother's Birthday Greeting to Her Son

by Phyllis Chesler



I can still remember the exact moment of his birth, how small and wet he was, and how unexpectedly blonde. He was gasping for air, needed oxygen, and I was completely worn down by a 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ hour labor. But, within an hour, I was up and filled with the most incredible joy. Giving birth to life is a unique rite of passage, both divine and yet incredibly human, the stuff of mortal beings, the way of female flesh. I was so overcome by it all that I wrote a book *With Child: A Diary of Motherhood*, which some publishers turned down because, as one editor said: "You can write about important things, why waste your time on this?" Another editor said: "You will not be a normal mother, other women will not be able to relate to your experience." Arnold Dolin, a wonderful man and a wonderful editor, published it. When my son was eighteen, he wrote the

Introduction to the book. He is a beautiful writer and I will forever admire his words.

But oh, how quickly his childhood was over. One minute it was here—diapers and Barbar-the Elephant King, Paddington Bears, and Cabbage Patch Kids, and all those little action figures (I called them boy dolls), and then it was all gone in only an eye-blink of eternity. Soon, my son towered over me; soon, he moved out and went to college; soon, he graduated and went to Law School. Now, he is a judge and he and his wife have children of their own. They have blessed me with two granddaughters.

So many people who were once in my life are gone now. Over time, they've just slipped away. The moving tapestry of my times, once filled with so many large and colorful figures, has begun to fray and fade. Once significant personalities (one's parents, previous spouses), have ever so softly disappeared. Some have died, others have moved away both geographically and politically. But, if one is blessed, one has a tried-and-true partner, a forever best friend or two or three, honorable allies, a new extended family, a loyal editor or two—and especially a child or children who have lived long enough to fulfill both their—and our dreams. My son is my greatest treasure, perhaps my most important contribution to the future.

Happy 43rd Birthday Judge A. May you live until 120, in great good health and may your daughters give you as much to be proud of as you've given me.