

Wonder Women

Agnodice! What a woman! A female who wanted to be a doctor in Ancient Greece, at a time when women weren't allowed to even think of such a thing! Sadly, she probably wasn't a real person, but she epitomises everything that women so often have to fight for just to be recognised as human beings. So when I was thinking about wonder women in general, John suggested that I write about members of my own family, women who will have had their counterparts in everybody's families, and all down the ages.

So let's begin with Grandma Amy Craig, who married a Moravian Minister and went to work in Jamaica. Amy had eight sons, but just before her last child was born, my grandfather Joseph Craig, died, and Amy was left to bring up the boys on her own. This she did, and lived to tell the tale.

Then let's think about Cousin Dorothy Augusta Connor. Auntie Dops, as we called her, was totally deaf, but she managed her condition so well that she became the headmistress of Fulneck Girls' School. We girls loved her and respected her, and thrived under her headship. She taught the little ones to do sign language, so that ultimately every boarder in the school was able to communicate in that way. She was an amazing lip reader, and could read the conversations of us pupils sitting at the far end of the dining room, and woe betide anyone who talked of anything untoward! She rode a camel in the Egyptian desert, at a time when ladies didn't do such things, and she had an open and enquiring mind, teaching us to question absolutely everything..

Next I think of my lovely mother who followed my dad to Jamaica, when what she really wanted to do was to open a little cake shop somewhere near the sea.. My mother, who was one of the most gentle people I know, was loved and respected by our Jamaican brothers and sisters, and when she knew that she hadn't long to live, she began to hand over her duties to the then Deaconess, Sr. Autumn Richardson.. And that brings me to my lovely stepmother, Autumn, who, when my mother died, became a rock and a helper to my father, and brought him through his time of sorrow. Autumn had had her own battles, as her training as a deaconess took place at the theological college in Kingston. The college was dominated by male students, who found Sr. Autumn an enormous challenge, as besides being a woman, she was very clever, and ran rings round them all. Consequently she had a very difficult time, but came through with flying colours, and for the last almost 50 years she has been a comfort and a blessing to all my family..

And so to the generation after me - and I give thanks for my dear daughter Susan, who, as many of you know, adopted quads when they were thirteen months old. They are now 16 years old, and a credit to Susan's loving care and attention over the years. My lovely daughter in law Cathy is a senior midwife, and when covid broke out, although she was due to retire, went back to work full time helping new mothers who were having to give birth in very traumatic circumstances. And finally my amazing daughter in law Lisa, my much loved Dilly, who is bringing up two children with cystic fibrosis. She is giving them both a life worth living, and in particular is giving her 12 year old daughter, Bethan, all the tools to be an absolute Wonder Woman in her own right.

There are many other women throughout my life who have stood for me in the role of Wonder Woman. I give thanks for them all, and for all that they have given to me over the years. So my message to all of you who are reading this, think of all the Wonder Women in your own life, remember them with joy and thankfulness, and who knows, you are most certainly a Wonder Woman yourself to someone close to you.

Elizabeth McOwat
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