

My Inspirations

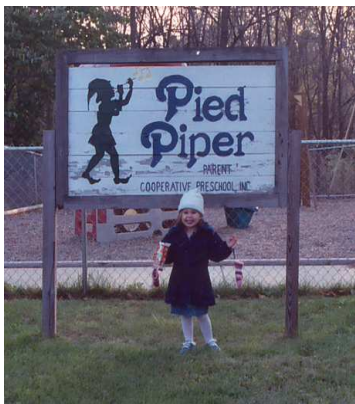
A Memoir

By Anna Walters

What could I have been thinking? How could I have let my son play with my camera? I was just looking for something to distract him, if only for a minute. I think this to myself, as I bend over to retrieve the broken and now useless camera. A camera that has captured so much of my life and that has been there with me as my life first began to unfold and take me where I am today. Now, it will be there no more. Even though my life is whole, this camera is now broken into pieces and can no longer keep track of all my accomplishments. My mind flashes back to the many pictures this camera has snapped. These moments in my life, that will forever be present because of this camera. These moments are the reason I am a teacher and a life-long learner today.



The first picture that flashes through my mind is of my new born daughter, Camryn, sleeping on the softest pink blanket. I remember how loved watching my daughter sleep, escaping into dreams of bottles, smiles, hugs, and kisses. I remember, as I watched her sleep, how I was determined to make her life special. How I dreamed that she would be able to do anything she wanted and have the skills to help her along the way. I remember fearing that one day she would ask me to help her with her math homework and I would not be able to help; a silly fear, but one that consumed me. I had her young, not too young, but younger than most. Even though I dabbled in some courses at the community college I was not really motivated to finish. However, that moment, as my daughter laid there sleeping, I pledged that I would go back to school. I would instill in my daughter the importance of education and the love of learning. Now, when I look at this picture, I think of new beginnings, promises, and moments that inspire people to do things they never imagined were possible—for me going back to school.



The next picture that flashed through my mind was of my daughter starting preschool. Those times were so difficult. Jim and I realized that each of us going to school part time and working part time was not realistic. It would take us forever to finally walk across that stage and to get a degree. So, with trepidation, we sold our first home and moved in with his parents; very, very, stressful times. Would anyone enjoy living with their mother-in-law that spoiled her granddaughter rotten? Yes, that is what grandparents are for but can a mother handle that sort of behavior 24/7, especially when the daughter would always run to grandma so she can get her own way? Yet, we preserved and no one was accidentally brutally

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murdered. My daughter started preschool during those long 2 years and I worked fulltime as Jim went to school fulltime. During this time, I still went part time to the community college but was still trying to decide what I would do. When Camryn started school how I loved seeing the excitement in Camryn's eyes when she talked about school. She loved talking about what she did, her friends, and her teacher. I found her stories fascinating and a small voice started humming in my head. Hmmm... maybe that is what I would love to do? Could I, someone who was an unmotivated student in high school and middle school, really become a teacher? What I see when I look at Camryn in this picture, on her first day of school, is how little moments in your life can push you towards a direction that you never considered before—in this case planting a seed for me to become a teacher.



Leo the Lion, Camryn's brother, my little force of nature. People, grandparents specifically, probably thought Jim and I were insane. Here we were, Jim almost done with school, no job, no home of our own, and we wanted to give Camryn a sibling. Camryn was a little over four when we decided to give her a sibling and I did not want an age difference of more than years between the two. Boy, did I end up hitting the nail on the head. Leo was born exactly five years, to the day that his big sister was born: September 25, 2004; Camryn was born in 1999. I remember back to the picture of Camryn holding her brother, her friend, on her birthday, "Happy Birthday Camryn! Is this what you have been wanting for your birthday?" Now I have two wonderful children that I do not want to let down;

another child to inspire me to succeed. I look at this picture, taken so long ago, and it shows me that when life brings you new challenges it only deepens your resolve to succeed.



Fast forward to the next picture my faithful camera snapped of me: Graduation day, May 6, 2006. After Leo was born we moved into my parent's house. Not the most ideal living arrangements for anyone involved but we all took it in stride. Jim was finally finished with school but was having a difficult time landing a real job. He worked for a food delivery place and when Leo was four months old I made my way onto Michigan State's campus to go fulltime to become a teacher. Slowly, the seeds my daughter planted into my thoughts eventually sprouted and I was on my way. This was January 2005 and I

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can not begin to describe the feelings that pulsed through my body as I walked onto campus after dropping my son off at daycare and my daughter off at school. I was scared that I would fail. I was nervous that I would be the oddball on a campus full of young, irresponsible, spoiled, children. I was anxious to get back to Leo and Camryn to be in their safe arms. Yet, I was determined I would finish what I started. I started off slow-- my class load that is, but gained momentum each semester. I took classes during the summers, took an overload of credits in the fall, which at that time we, thankfully, gratefully, wonderfully bought a home of our own. Oh what a feeling, finally living in our own home. It had been three years since we fell asleep in a house that we called our own. Anyway, I went to school, I had a home, I was finally married to Jim (which upset me a small bit because I wanted my maiden name on my degree), and I was almost done with school. Then it came time for my camera to capture a monumental moment, my graduation picture with my husband, my son, and my daughter. My children the ones who inspired me were there to see me accomplish my dream. However, as every Michigan State University Education Major will tell: my dream still had one more year before it could completely be called reality. My camera captured a moment in my life that symbolizes the powers a family has on helping you reach the goal you always dreamed of obtaining.



My camera, my friend, my companion, my reliable memory recorder, was with me again. Camryn was starting first grade and I was starting fifth grade—teaching fifth grade, of course. My internship was challenging, exciting, frustrating, wonderful, horrible, funny, and depressing all wrapped into one package of a year. Camryn and Leo were there to live every moment with me and to push me to do a great job. My camera was there to help record the moments that made me happy and also the moments that made me sad. I look at this picture, which was taken the first day of school and I remember how nervous I was and also how sad I was. I was sad because this was the start of me not being able to volunteer as much in

Camryn's school. I was a fulltime, unpaid, of course, but a fulltime working momma now. I was not going to be able to pick or drop Camryn off at school anymore. I was not going to be able to go with her on field trips anymore. I had my own field trips to supervise. So, this picture symbolizes the end of one era and the beginning of another.

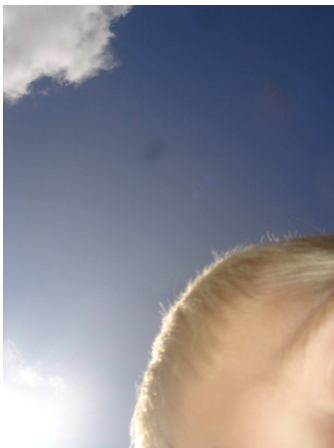
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My faithful camera, I wonder if you knew your time was coming to an end. Did you have a clue that the pictures you were snapping were slowly coming to an end? Here is one of the last few that my faithful companion took; Leo, my boy, starting his first day of preschool. My son, whom is shy, smart, clingy, and hilarious, was getting to be such a big boy. A lot has changed since the last picture. We now live in Ohio, unfortunately my days as a "working" mom came to an end because of the wonderful job market for teachers. Yet, it is wonderful knowing that I get the chance to volunteer and spend time with my son, like I did with my daughter. During this time I also just got finished applying for grad school at MSU. I knew that if I was not teaching, I at least wanted to be learning. When I look at this picture that my camera took, I think of how my children constantly inspire me to succeed and how I hope that I will be able to inspire my children (and future students) to succeed.



Can you tell what this picture is? This is the last moments of my camera's life. The images that were taken and captured in my camera's body were devastating. The culprit is my son; the focal point was maybe his face? My camera, my friend, did you feel any pain? When I placed you in my son's hands did you quiver in fear as to what was to come? You were there for me, you were there for my family, and this is how I repay you? By not keeping you safe and protecting you? I will miss the weight of you body in my hands as I venture out and accomplish new things. I will miss your unwavering commitment to preserving my family's memories and adventures. Even though, I will replace you with a newer model and eventually come to love that new camera; even though I will also add on a digital video camera that

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will capture my family's moments at an even better way, you will always hold a special place in my heart because you were there when my dreams were first realized and you were there when my dreams were finally made into reality. You may be broken beyond repair but the memories you captured will last a lifetime and will be shared for many generations to come.