



Always turn the light off

By Krista Gleason

It was around 6:00 when my mom called me for supper. “Dinner’s ready!” she shouted, so I would hear her from the basement. I ran upstairs and took my seat at the far end of the table, my dad across from me, my brother to the right.

“Hello, is anybody there?” my mom yelled into the basement. My dad looked at me accusingly. My brother snickered, because this time, it wasn’t him.

I heard the flick of the light switch. Then she came to the table and gave me the look. The look every mom has that silently says, *Dear child, I love you. But how many times do I have to tell you?* Turn the light off when you leave the room.

This happened a lot. In the bathroom. The bedroom. The stairway. “Hello, is anybody there?” It was my mom’s refrain every time one of us left a light on in a room devoid of human beings.

Lights are powered by electricity. Electricity costs money. And money, as every kid learns at a young age, doesn’t grow on trees.

One day, my three-year-old left the bathroom light on after using the potty and washing his hands. (I know he washed them, because he said he did.) When I noticed the sliver of light underneath the door, I walked over, turned the handle, and shouted inside, “Hello, is anybody there?” It was instinctive, an almost out-of-body experience. Like when Patrick Swayze took over Whoopi Goldberg’s psyche in the movie “Ghost.”

It was then that I realized, I am my mother’s daughter. I realized, too, that my mom was teaching us more than how to operate a light switch. Think before you act. Focus. Be respectful and responsible. Don’t be wasteful.

My mom passed away in 2006, and it felt like all the lights went out. After a while, they slowly came back on and the darkness faded. Unfortunately, my mom didn’t get to meet her two grandchildren, one who often does and one who someday will, forget to turn the light off. But I feel her smile in that told-you-so kind of way when I ask, “Hello, is anybody there?” And no one answers.

Krista Gleason is a freelance writer and owner of Gleason Writes. She lives in Canandaigua, N.Y. with her husband, two children, and two pocket beagles who bark a lot.

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