

I Hate Being a Homeschool Mom

from Carol Lugg

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Yea, you read it right, I hate being a homeschool mom -- at least I did one day this summer. I was simply enjoying a day at a water park with my children when the hatred over my freely chosen career began to take hold. I was standing in a line beside my second child, John, reading the sign that said the combined weight of two riders must be equal to or greater than 140 pounds. My big brown eyed, gentle spirited child asked me innocently, "So, Mom, would you weigh enough to ride alone?"

"Yes, John, I would."

I thought a blunt reply would stop the conversation dead in its track. Instead, he barrels forward in the conversation being so bold as to ask how much weight I would have to lose before I could no longer ride alone. I informed him it had probably been since about 8th grade that I weighed less than 140 pounds and perhaps a brief week in the summer preceding my junior year in college when I was daily running 4-6 miles, lifting weights, and swimming one mile. He asked me why I didn't do that anymore. I told him I would have to enroll him and his siblings in school in order to find the time necessary to complete that exercise regime. He decided he would rather have an overweight mother than be enrolled in public school. I have always considered John my more sensitive child. We rode down the Great White Shark backwards laughing and enjoying the sunshine on our sun screened protected backs - little did I know of the conversations that lay ahead.

We pulled our tube out of the pool and decided to hit the Gravity Groove for our next ride. The Gravity Groove was the ride that had the weight requirements and I was hoping for a wait in line that would include chatting about how pretty the mountains were, or attempting to locate our car in the parking lot, but John decided to keep the conversation focused. He was observing riders in the Gravity Groove and how they would dip down and then shoot up and over the incline before heading for the pool of water. He watched a lighter couple, a thin mother and her small child who must have barely, if at all, hit the 140 pound mark requirement. They got stuck in the groove and so the workers had to come and bail them out. After watching the rescue and the perky little mom saying something, like, "Oh, I guess I weigh less than I realized!", John turned and wanted to know if I had gained any weight since last summer.

"No, John, thank goodness, I appear to be holding steady. Why are you asking?"

"Well, last year we got some pretty good air on this ride and wanted to know if I should expect more air this year. I mean, if you gained 20 pounds since last year, wouldn't we go faster and higher than last year? I've probably gained a few pounds, but I don't think enough to make a difference. If I gained some, and you gained a lot, why, this ought to be a pretty good ride."

As I stood on the cement steps trying to decide whether or not to hurl the raft or the child over the edge, I amazed even myself with my calm retort. "That seems to be correct reasoning, John, but we'd have to read up on Newton's Laws to fully understand what would happen." Rather than open himself up to a lecture on Newton's Laws, John took the conversation in a safer direction, from his perspective, and proceeded to ask me if I had lost any weight since last year. I was able to put his fears at rest. The chances of going slower this year just didn't exist. We rode down the Gravity Groove, hitting the groove at lightening speed which gave us the necessary impetus to successfully maneuver the up and over and into the pool part of the ride. My self-conscious body crawled out of the pool, thinking that would be a good project for John next year. We tend to be a little weak in the sciences, but perhaps it was time to introduce John to Sir Isaac Newton and expect a five paged typed report on the man who created the laws that governed our ride. That's it! He would be working on his report and I could be out running -- what a brilliant plan! Next year he would have to recruit another mom to ride with him because my reduction in body mass would render me useless on the Gravity Groove.

We decided to head to the car and get our picnic lunch and I was secretly praying that John would not bring up the weight topic in front of my svelte 5'8", 120 pound sister-in-law. We joked through lunch, putting the various junk foods we had brought along into food groups. Hawaiian punch? Ah, a fruit serving! Gushers? Fruit group is filling up quickly. Corn chips? Always important to get the veggies down. Potato chips? We certainly will be striving for five in the fruit and vegetables! Cheese Puffs? Yes, the dairy products could not be overlooked. My thoughts of reducing body mass were lost in our silly game.

I hadn't yet ridden the Twin Towers ride, but decided I wanted to change suits before the afternoon session of water park riding. I had been swimming laps over the winter and hadn't realized how the chlorine had eaten away at the elastic in my high necked tank. I emerged from the locker room in a new light blue, lower necked suit and was quickly approached by John asking why I had changed suits. I explained that my older suit was getting worn and I wanted to be in a suit that was snug around the seat so I wouldn't get a 'wedgie'. He remarked that the suit was certainly snug and that he didn't realize moms got 'wedgies'. Let's see, let's make that a seven-page paper.

The suit continued to bother John as we stood in line for the Twin Towers. He thought the black suit looked better, but he understood that this blue suit, being lighter in color, was probably cooler - he just wished it went up a little higher around the neck. I told him next time I would buy a turtleneck suit if that would make him more comfortable. We were gazing out over the parking lot, looking at the different cars, and John remarked, "You know, Mom, you're right when you say black is slimming." His sympathetic little heart continued when he added, "And I can understand not wanting to get 'wedgies'." I was hoping his "black" remark was in reference to the mom below dressed in black, but this relentless abuse was forcing me to consider sending in resignation papers upon my return home. No other mother in that line was being subjected to the abuse I was receiving from the mouth of my child -- the child I taught to read, to add, and to question.

The cousins were all in line, watching as their mothers were going to race down the Twin Towers. This ride involves lying face down on a mat, with your hands gripping the handles at the front of the mat. There was a discussion about who would win and of course the explanations of why they felt each would win. My excitement about this ride took a deep

plunge when they decided that I, of course, had the larger mass, so would have more weight to collect more speed. I felt slightly redeemed when one of my little offspring uttered the word inertia in the conversation. See, I am so busy homeschooling I don't have time to put in the miles I should run to keep my weight down, but my kids do have a decent vocabulary. The positive self-esteem resurgence was quickly squelched when one of the kids pointed out that their aunt was more streamlined, thus, having less force working against her. I appeared to have stronger legs, so perhaps I would have a stronger push off and that would allow me to start out with more speed. Their aunt might have faster reactions, thereby getting a head start. Darling John quipped, "Well, Mom's suit is snuggier, so she might be more streamlined because there would absolutely be NO room for air pockets to gather in her suit. She might actually be more streamlined than we think." I stood there trying to think of another career where you don't have to take such abuse all day and then kiss them good night. Let the race begin.

I won. Three out of the four times, I won. I didn't even want Newton's Laws or heat absorption of colors discussed. I just wanted them to admit I was the superior athlete. We headed up the tower with the kids planning their races and I was alone in my thoughts, revisiting my days of athletic prowess, when that little dark eye menace of mine revealed all his new found calculated knowledge of the Law of Physics, "Well, Mom pretty much proved it was weight. I mean, we can figure out now who should win. Look, mom could beat all those moms over there, but that one, well that would be a good race. Do you think she would race you, Mom?" Ah yes, those laws those used to baffle me have become very, very clear. That little mind that was in motion and would stay in a linear motion would have to acted upon by an outside force.

"Hey guys, how about a slushy? Mom's treat!" The outside force, that incredible little law of physics, rang true again.