Son in Progress

This is my son Alex when he was a toddler. Look how cute he was. Everyone in the family unanimously agrees that he was the cutest baby in history until my grandson came along. Here is a picture of him now. I still think he's adorable but I'm his mother so that shouldn't surprise anyone. His was not an easy childhood. Getting him raised was a challenge. When he was eight years old he was diagnosed with severe attention deficit disorder and thus began a ten year roller coaster ride trying to get him through school, through adolescence and ready for life in the real world. I used to pray that when we came out on the other side we would still be speaking. I really worried about that.

I used to keep a picture of us together on my dresser. He was about four or five years old. We were playing in my Mom's pool. I was floating around on a tube and he was sitting on top of me. We looked happy. I kept it out as a reminder of a time when I knew he loved me and more importantly he liked me. I feel confident that during his growing up my son never stopped loving me as his mother but I'm fairly confident that there were plenty of times that we didn't like each other too much. One of the ways he struggled was with impulse control and one day when I have his permission I will tell some of his stories. I can tell you though that his least favorite thing to do was write. I often used this to my advantage when he had to be punished. I still have his essays on "The Dangers of Smoking" and "Why going to McDonald's on your bike without permission is a bad idea." I think if I really looked I could find "Why children should not befriend homeless men" and "Yelling at your friend when he is hurt is not nice." You get the picture.

It wasn't always rough. No one in my life has made me laugh harder than he has. He is a good sport. He often gets picked on for his somewhat lazy grooming or the silly things he does and he always takes it in stride. He is smart as a whip. He is the kid who would not do any homework all year and yet get a perfect score on his final exam. He passed advanced on almost all of his SOL's yet he was constantly on the verge of failing. He drove his teachers crazy. When I'm late coming home from work he calls me to find out where I am. He doesn't like leaving me home alone. He worries about me. If I ask him to do something for me he'll do it…if he remembers…which is not often.

This weekend I had a party at my house and a good friend of mine was there. She hadn't seen him in a while. She commented to me that he is looking and acting more and more like his dad. An observation I had made many times myself. Imagine how hard it was to parent a child who is the mini me of a man you couldn't stay married to. It's been hard. I do see so much of his father in him. His dad is not a terrible guy. We just couldn't keep it together and unfortunately many of the things he did to drive a wedge between us I sometimes see in my son. I once expressed my frustration to my mother that sometimes it's like I've had no influence on my son at all. All of my hours at this doctor and that, all the driving from one counselor to another trying to find someone to help this kid. All the conferences, child study meetings, principal's hearings , court dates, helping with school work, bailing him out of one problem after another, all the late nights and tears and prayers and he turns out just like his dad. His dad who never went to a single conference or doctor's appointment in ten years. It just didn't seem fair. My wise mother advised patience. She reminded me that he only has half his father's genes. I am in there somewhere waiting to come out. She reminded me that a mother's influence is felt over a life time.

So Saturday evening we were talking and Alex told me that he is going to put his hair in to dreadlocks soon. He has been talking about doing this for a few years now but he hasn't done it so I usually say "Yeah, yeah ok" and don't take him quite seriously. This time was different. He laid out his plan. He has been researching it. He knows what he has to do to form them and maintain

them. He made the comment “I am going to have to use this special shampoo for the rest of my life.” Uh excuse me…what did he just say? The rest of his life?!!? There is not enough punctuation on the keyboard to express my shock over this comment. He said “Yeah Mom, I’m making a commitment to them.” Ok, a commitment is good, but to your hair? So I then said “Well you know 15 years from now you’ll be going to parent teacher conferences like that” thinking this would maybe cause him to think twice. Well dang if he didn’t shut me down. He said “It’s just hair Mom. It’s just freaking hair, if someone wants to judge me for that that’s their problem.”

Schooled.

I am going to go call my mother and tell her she was right.

I am in there after all.