

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Birth of Potty Theory

Ever wonder about the meaning of life? The vast majority of life's innumerable lessons can be explained in any given restroom. Take some time and contemplate the yin and yang of the potty experience. This rather encapsulated approach can tell us a lot about the world that surrounds us.

My upbringing in the Midwest was particularly happy and uneventful. Mine was the typical middle-class family: mom, dad, and older brother. I went to school, had plenty of friends, and experienced all the typical activities kids live through and participate in. That was the entirety of my early life. However, in one aspect of life I was more knowledgeable than other little girls. I call it "potty theory"—that's right, potty theory.

Actually, the term was coined by my husband, but it is a very appropriate description of a budding science. Well, the term *science* may be a little over the top, but potty theory involves the observation of toilets, restrooms, and all things pertaining

to women relieving themselves—sort of a combination of civil engineering and logistics. *How disgusting*, you may be thinking. But rest assured there is a plethora of useful information to be shared in the following pages for the female species.

I am a natural-born “potty theorist.” Okay, that may not be entirely accurate. The jury is out as to whether this trait is inherited or learned; perhaps it is a combination of both. That’s a question for anthropologists and psychologists to sort out. However, one thing I undoubtedly did inherit from my mom are the world’s most efficient kidneys coupled with arguably the world’s smallest bladder. I believe that everyone must recognize and go with their strengths, and having these physical attributes led Mom to recognize her strength: potty theory. She was a true expert in the field. If there were an institution of higher learning anywhere in the world that offered a degree in potty theory, my mom would have had a PhD; in fact, she could have single-handedly headed up any university program. Mom was self-taught—homeschooled, as it were. Even so, the knowledge and information she gathered through the years regarding toilets and their impact on female plumbing was priceless. She was a pioneer in the field; as a matter of fact, as far as I’m concerned she was *the* pioneer in the field.

I still have sharp memories of Mom from when I was a wee tot. If we were in a store or restaurant and I had to pee, she would scope out the restroom faster than any Olympic timed trial. Then she would quickly assess the cleanliness of the restroom. Even if the toilet “appeared” clean, she would look for the tissue seat covers. One was never enough; no fewer than three was acceptable. If no seat covers were available, then layering the seat with toilet paper was the next best solution—and Mom’s version of layering took the practice of potty theory to a whole new level. There had to be a large roll of paper for her to pull it off, and by the time she was done, there would be so much paper on the seat, it was more like a fluffy pillow under my butt. That made the whole potty experience somewhat less uninviting, and even comforting, to a

point. Knowing there were protective, billowing layers between me and that silent beast was extremely reassuring.

Flushing the potty required great finesse. The paper had to be introduced into the bowl slowly to avoid a plug of monumental proportions. Mom accomplished this by grabbing softball-sized wads of toilet paper and sliding them one by one, alternating sides, into the bowl, flushing after each slide. Patience had to be exercised since the toilet had to be flushed after each slide. Yes, it was time-consuming, but it was much better than the alternative: a flood worthy of building an ark.

If there was not enough toilet paper available or the cleanliness of the toilet seat looked questionable, Mom would move to Plan B, lifting me over the toilet so I could pee. She always carried what seemed to be an inordinate number of tissues in her purse; it was her secret contingency plan, “just in case.” This is yet another jewel of wisdom Mom bestowed upon me. You never know when you’ll have to go into a toilet stall and—*yikes!*—there will be not a shred of toilet paper to be found. In a flash, that wad of tissues in your purse has become as valuable as a 1850s five-dollar gold piece.

Mom was my hero. She conquered every restroom she came into contact with in a matter of minutes, with the strength of Atlas and the precision of a SWAT team. Mom was the master and I the apprentice. Trust me, the apprentice learned well . . . with the absorption of a sponge.

As I grew, my training expanded. The next lesson was the “squat, squeeze, and squirt” technique. Mom had leg muscles that rivaled a kangaroo’s in grace, strength, and flexibility, and this technique called for straddling the toilet, crouching down (as close as possible to the seat without touching), squeezing, and then squirting. It was very important to hover as close to the seat as the law of gravity would allow, thus reducing the splash of water from inside the bowl. Touching the seat was never an

option, since you never knew what kind of critters lived, even thrived, there. Take a moment to envision those critters roaming freely on the smooth surface of every toilet seat in the world. After you wrap your brain around that image, now imagine how many more unspeakable, even unthinkable, demons exist inside the toilet bowls. No horror movie in the history of Hollywood has ever come close to capturing the terror a public bathroom can inflict upon the psyche. For women, peeing in a public toilet is just like a diving competition: the fewer splashes, the better. If mastered, the “squat, squeeze, and squirt” technique eliminates the need for seeking out a toilet seat cover or padding the seat with enough toilet paper to make any Halloween prank pale in comparison. For me, the technique became particularly useful during school lunch periods, when time was of the essence. After a few years of this I had leg muscles that could rival those of any professional baseball catcher. I’m proud to say that, thanks to Mom, I still do to this very day.

Mom also instructed me to inspect the seat after I finished to make sure it had no pee droplets on it. If upon inspection a few strays were observed, the toilet seat had to be wiped off. Potty theorists should have consideration for their female compadres who venture into the stall after them: this was another bit of wisdom Mom drilled into me. You need the softball-sized mass of toilet paper or the wad of tissue paper from your purse to effectively pull this off. Take the toilet paper or tissues and wipe the seat gingerly, constantly cognizant of the distance between you, the paper, and the seat. Then gently drop the paper into the bowl, knowing you did a good deed by having compassion for the next female potty user.

Before long my education advanced to the graduate-level program: the athletic flush. The average person would think it requires no particular skill to push the handle that flushes all evidence down the neck of the toilet bowl. Au contraire—there is a certain dance the experienced potty theorist must perform to complete