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## Books

### **In My Mother's Closet - An Invitation to Remember**

by Eugenia Zukerman

Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana

This sweet little book is a compilation of interviews that the author conducted with 46 other women concerning their reminiscences of their mothers' closets. Many of the subjects are well known: Mary Louise Parker, Carrie Fisher, Dolores Hart, Lesley Stahl, Judy Collins, Renee Fleming and Claire Bloom are just a few of the famous who are included. Many others who are less well known to the public are nonetheless women of considerable accomplishment.

All these women seem to have had relationships to their mothers that are overwhelmingly positive, even those who admit to having rebelled against the maternal influence at some point in their growing-up years. In fact, this might be a good book to give to a daughter or daughter-in-law who is having difficulty with her own daughter, inasmuch as it will support the hope that eventually Mom returns to being the hero she was while her children were very young.

By nature episodic (three or four pages given to each interview), *In My Mother's Closet* is a good book to pick up and put down for brief, engaging reads. Reading it all at once tended to overload this reader, and after 150 pages or so, I felt as if I were glazing over and losing the individuals on the pages.

There is, in fact, quite a lot of repetition. That may be the nature of the book's subject or of the subjects themselves, many of whom share similar family backgrounds and educations. Either the author was fixated on an idea, or a great many of her subjects had studied just enough psychology to interpret maternal closet as womb, because the simile comes up over and over again.

On a happier note, so do the tales of tactile, sensual memories of the items in those closets: silks, velvets, scarves, hats, gloves, lingerie, jewelry cases, and more than any other memory, the scents of their mother's perfumes or powders. For those of us who were children during the '30's and 40's, the mere mention of hats with half veils or stockings with seams down the back or cologne like *Tweed* or *Chanel #5* releases a torrent of emotional recall. The physical presence of our mothers can be evoked by many, many things: a song, or a voice that sounds familiar, or perhaps a treasured piece of jewelry; and like Ms. Zukerman, we are comforted even as we may be saddened by the reminder.

The similarities from interview to interview remind us that to be a mother is to have incredible power over our children, no matter their — or our — ages. With Mother's Day coming up, you might consider dipping into this book. Eugenia Zukerman is a world famous flutist who is also a well-known TV personality and writer.

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