

IT'S GRAND TO BE MIMI

By Terri White

“Mimi, I just love spending time with you,” announced six-year-old Adrian. Heart melt. That’s the best compliment any person could receive.

I love people and enjoy investing in their lives. And my grandchildren – well, they are the icing on the cake, enriching my life. During the summer, I try to spend extra time with them. All those hugs and kisses. What’s not to like?

My older grands have flown the coop, living their grown-up lives. Nevertheless, they still keep in touch with texts and occasional visits. I like sending them encouraging words, and receiving their “I love you” messages. Keepers, for sure.

Our youngest grandsons’ ages range from six to eleven. When they visit on rainy days, they slip through the mud, jump on the trampoline, and chase each other – all the while screeching in delight.

On sunny days, they ride bikes or scooters. If Popsy gets involved, they gang up on him for a rousing basketball game. Then there’s the dogpile Popsy. All the grands tackle him, but he wins every time.

“Come on, Popsy, I’m going to show you some new moves,” challenged nine-year-old Tristan. New moves or not, Popsy still reigns.

And those board games. That’s my kingdom. My grandma taught all her grandkids card and board games. She was a card shark, my mom was a card shark, and all of us grandkids became card sharks.

While our kids were growing up, we added to our stash of board games yearly. All those games, and more, are still stacked on our shelves. Now we play them with our grandkids. For Ryder and Lucas, our eleven-year-old grandsons, the competition is stiff – to the death. Oh, the lamentations when Mimi wins! Then it’s game on again.

Sorry, one of my favorites, is part chance and part skill. Clue requires more mature reasoning skills, but the grands tackle it anyway. Fifteen-year-old Josie, a budding artist, prefers Telestrations, a drawing game. Her pictures are stellar. Mine? Not so much. Lexi, our oldest granddaughter, reigns queen of any speed games. Speed Scrabble? Double Solitaire? She’s your girl. She misses nothing.

Of course, there’s the simple “button, button, who’s got the button” that we jazz up with humorous antics. Jace will stroll in sporting a goofy hat with a play microphone in hand and ask in a cartoon voice, “Button, button, who’s got the button.” Then the traditional slap on the closed hands to find that button. Not successful? Back to the other room while we spirit the button to a different hand.

Charades? We knock it out with impromptu costumes and made-up rules. Perfect rainy afternoon family entertainment. Reading, my favorite pastime, filled many hours in our family. In fact, we continued a family reading time all through our kids' teenage years. The grandkids are no different. On sleepovers, we snuggle up with a stack of books while Mimi reads aloud – voices and all.

Planting flowers, baking, scavenger hunts, dodge ball, hide-and-seek, and croquet fill the hours. Making memories. During the fun, little opportunities arise to drop pearls of wisdom. At age 72, I've finally learned one or two.

Swimming lessons. All our kids and grands loved them. Some even joined the swim team. However, Adrian, our youngest grandson, is another story. Today he cried throughout the entire lesson. On the way home, we chatted. First, I reminded him that his teacher will not let him drown. Then I explained that it's okay to be afraid, but that it's also okay to still practice his lessons while being afraid. My final bit of advice included my motto: feel the fear and do it anyway. I encouraged him to repeat it. He did – twice. Lastly, I noted that by the end of the week he probably won't fear swimming anymore. Fingers crossed.

The best part of grandparenting? The buck doesn't stop with us. We offer the softness that parents can't. They must do the hard thing – the buck-stopping thing. Sure, there's a line I draw. Frankly, though, it's far wider than when I was raising my children.

“Who are you?” my kids ask. I have morphed into a ball of mush, lapping up all the attention my grands lavish on me. What a “grand” life.