



# Expensive Cars & Fancy Underwear

In life, we all have choices.

A very close friend of mine named Sara shared this story with me about a childhood memory.

In 1948 this family of three (Sara, age 8, and her parents) moved to Southwest Missouri in search of a better life. Their plans for wealth failed and Sara's father returned to his teaching profession while her mother took odd jobs. Making ends meet was a struggle, but there was a certain pride that was present.

Two things that happened, and that were never really understood by Sara, were that they drove a Packard car and bought their underwear at Macy's Department Store. Of course, the Packard is history, but in the early 1950s, it was a sign of prosperity. In addition to this fancy car, there were those fancy, ruffled panties from Macy's that Sara wore.

Why? Why was this happening? Looking back, Sara can see the reasons for the fancy car, but never really understood the fancy underwear, especially when a new, store-bought dress was unheard of.

## The car:

Sara's father grew up on his parent's farm where work was hard and long. He grew a certain disdain for that lifestyle and this motivated him to go to college and have a career as an educator and superintendent of schools. Sara's mother also shared in his pride and together they wanted him to look successful. One way to do this was to drive a car that represented success. Keep in mind, this was happening while many meals were of the soup-bone variety.



## The underwear:

Sara never did understand why her mother bought fancy underwear that no one could see. Well, maybe that's not quite true. You see, in that community everyone washed their clothes on Monday and hung them outside on the clothesline to dry. After the clothes were hung out, it was customary to drive around and see what the neighbor's clothes looked like. Were they as white as they could be? Were there any new clothes hanging there? Sara can only speculate that fancy underwear hanging on their line for neighbors to see could be her mother's way of showing they were successful!



Yes, Sara's parents had pride and wanted to look successful, which a person can find fault with, but even though their actions may sound a little quirky, it was something else that Sara remembers most about her parents that has had a lasting value in her life.

This was an event that happened May 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Every year her family would take a bouquet of freshly cut flowers from their garden and hang them on the front door knob of their neighbors' homes. What was unique is that this was done very early in the morning before the neighbors would wake up so the flowers could be placed without their knowing who put them there. There was no note of identity, just a blessing of a bouquet of flowers left by some unknown person. Sara relished this exercise and was given the duty of delivering each bouquet. This unconditional act of kindness was very normal in Sara's childhood as throughout the year produce and baked goods were shared with neighbors who were also "just making ends meet".

In life we all have a choice. We can accentuate the odd and quirky things a person or family does and dwell on that, or we can do what Sara has done and pass on to her children and their families the values she relished as a child.

Yes, Sara is my wife, my very best friend, and is better known today as Jayne.

This story can also be found on [www.aswedolife.com](http://www.aswedolife.com).

Doug



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