

Menses 1961 to 1990

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This missive was written as part of the [SPIN](#) class offered by Kathy Kaufman KinKaid SPIN “Doctor” Kathy Kaufman Kinkaid keeps asking questions that I have not thought about in years. This weeks homework was to think about menstruation and cycles in my life. Menses has always been an issue with me. I always wondered what those funny shaped pads were under the bathroom sink (we usually only had one bathroom in my childhood and as I approached my menarche, my Mother gave me a small 3x5” pamphlet from Kotex, explaining how I would soon find a small drop of blood on my panties, and this would lead to eventually having children (???). That was a mystery to me for a long time. I was 11 when I started my period, and they continued lurching along for the next 29 years. I have a family history of heavy periods, large clots and irregular periods. When I was 16 my Mother and Father announced she was probably pregnant... but it turned out to be a false alarm and part of her menopause cycles. What a relief, I was upset that my parents actually had sex (even though they had an openly affectionate and loving relationship). I was given the whole set of paraphanelia (probably received when she got the aforementioned book from Kotex). This included pads and the infamous pad holder. If you have never had to wear one of these contraptions, it is unique. There is a waistband with dangling clasps in front and back where you “hook” the long straps on your pads to secure them close to your body. The pads were thick and wide and bunched up, allowing my panties to scooch up and get stained by the blood. It was uncomfortable, messy and I hated it! I constantly had smells and stains. And my period always came at the least opportune time. I arrived in New York on my way to Germany, and the flight from New York to Frankfurt was 8 hours, and guess who started their period? And I had a window seat on a three across seating plan, having to disturb my two seatmates to get up and go to the bathroom! And the mess and inconvenience was the least of my problems. I had painful periods for years before I was finally diagnosed with endometriosis in my 30s. My grandmother assured me that after I had my first child the painful periods would cease, as that was what happened to her. The first two or three days of my period were increasingly debilitating and I often had to miss school or work due to the pain. When my son David was born, I had to have a C-section, so there went the vaginal stretching that would, per my Grandmother, clear up my issues. I kept asking male OB/GYNs why something so natural would hurt so much, and was always poo-pooed. My painful periods continued to become more painful as I aged. When I finally was diagnosed with endometriosis, no one wanted to do anything about it. I was prescribed successively stronger pain pills One OB/GYN (a woman who understood my pain) prescribed Anaprox, an NSAID, and it was miraculous! My pain was assuaged and I only had to take one pill for complete relief. I was ecstatic. BUT, I had to increase the dosage to get the same relief, the same old story. My OB/GYN who told me that I could go on a narcotic pain killer, or I could have a complete hysterectomy. Knowing that I did not want to go on a narcotic (I probably would have been given oxycontin and become an addict!) I scheduled my operation in 1990, when I was 40. That operation was the best thing that I have done. After recovering from the actual operation I NEVER felt better in my life. I felt like I had been released from prison! I certainly wished that I had done it 10 years sooner as I had married a man who had a vasectomy and I had no desire for more children. In writing this missive I realize that I should have been more persistent about getting relief from my pain earlier, and that makes me angry that the doctors did not hear me when I said I was in debilitating pain every month for at least half of my life! And not only did I take the Anaprox for much longer than I should have, it ate a hole in my stomach and I will have an ulcer for the rest of my life! I still feel that menses should be a painless monthly bodily function, and not the debilitating pain that I suffered. Oh, just an amusing aside. As I did not feel well when I was menstruating, during the time I was still living at home, I would usually lie on the couch covered by an afghan. My Father would always ask me what was wrong and I would tell him that I had a headache, as I knew he knew nothing about having a period! Nuff said, another

floodgate opened. Thank you Kathy for facilitating these releases.

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