

Who Are You Calling Grandma?

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Not Your Grandma's Grandma

Baby Boomer women shun old-fashioned norms of grandmotherhood and take on their new roles as wise family matriarchs with sexy bravado, sharp humor, and wicked insight

Roseville, Calif., July 13, 2009 – When it came time for author Maridel Bowes to embrace the news of her impending status as a grandmother, her reaction could be compared to the now iconic moment in *Terms of Endearment* when Aurora declares, “Why should I be happy about being a grandmother?” While Bowes gradually and lovingly came around as she describes in her hilarious and heartfelt memoir, *“Who Are You Calling Grandma?” True Confessions of a Baby Boomer’s Passage*, it wasn’t without gutsy honesty and a fair amount of self-reflection — and what’s more, Bowes’ feelings will not come as a shock to a generation who has faced all roles with a wary eye and a keen desire to reinvent the past. For Boomers, the once enthusiastic acceptance of yesterday’s Grandma may or may not be the automatic response.

Bowes belongs to a generation of women who helped blaze the trail toward equal rights, often considered themselves rebels, hippies or flower children, experimented with a few “substances,” and generally reflect an era that could be described as, “So you want to start a revolution?” Few of these now-aging Baby Boomers ever pictured themselves with a rolling pin in one hand, a flour-covered pinafore, and grand babies on their hips — an image lodged in their memories from grandmothers past. Therefore, these chic and sophisticated women are far more likely to resist an identity of old-fashioned grand parenting. Baby Boomers see themselves more as “sexy” mama, who by the way, also happens to have a grandchild — which isn’t to suggest they don’t dearly love their grand babies.

“When a Baby Boomer hears the news she is going to become a Grandma, don’t expect her to shop like a stork-smitten fool or get out the knitting needles,” says Bowes. “We’re talking about women who’ve had or still have noteworthy careers, are blazing new trails in the modern workforce, and pride themselves on creating amazing lives outside of traditional female stereotypes. Baby Boomers may not even ask their kids, ‘Hey, when are you going to give me a grandchild?’ In fact, they may not expect one at all. So when the ‘big news’ hits, these women, even if accepting of it, may experience some unexpected feelings.”



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Bowes wrote her memoir “*Who are You Calling Grandma?*” as a reflection not of the actual experience of *being* a grandmother, but as a “trimester” journal of her experiences, revelations and insights. As she followed her son and daughter-in-law’s passing milestones across the months, her own feelings emerged — about her own parenting, her inner conflict as a “competing” grandparent, her neurosis about Christmas arrangements, vexing search for her own new name — as well the feelings behind her reluctance. Through it all, she began to realize that it was the old-fashioned notions of grandparenthood didn’t seem to fit her — and that it was up to her to invent her own version of being a grandmother.

“When my son and daughter-in-law announced they were expecting, I had a lot of ‘unexpected’ reactions,” says Bowes. “I began to wonder, ‘Is this just me?’ I started talking to women and realized that my feelings were not uncommon — but instead the reflection of a generation of women caught in the web of cultural transformation: changing norms, roles and societal mores. I really wanted to take those feelings out of the ‘closet’ and support women to discover this truly is a Grand Passage, one that can greatly enrich the profound experience of a grandchild’s birth — regardless of the first reaction. It’s still a traditional rite, but we can bring a new perspective to it by making our trimester months about more than baby clothes, the nursery and the shower. I think ‘*Who are You Calling Grandma?*’ embraces and celebrates this primal transition in a new way and helps women realize that becoming a grandmother is fundamentally about preparing ourselves for a new adventure in love.”

“*Who are You Calling Grandma*” retails for \$12.95. It can be purchased at www.whoareyoucallinggrandma.com, www.3Lpublishing.com, or Amazon.com. For interviews or questions, contact Michelle Gamble-Risley at 916.300.8012.

