**Bay Area Parent**

**PMA First Place Award/Interview**

**Are you a Bad Mother?**  
*Ayelet Waldman looks at how the label is choking American Moms* By Peggy Spear

A few years ago, Berkeley writer Ayelet Waldman became the poster child for the words Bad Mother. She didn't commit murder, lose her kids at an airport or embezzle thousands of dollars from the PTA, but she did something way worse. She admitted she loved her husband more than her children.

The "confession," which appeared in an essay in the New York Times style section, was meant to shed light on the fact that so many mothers of her era refocused the passion of their marriages into the raising of their children. She and her husband still enjoyed a passionate relationship in addition to raising their four young kids.

Still, the damage was done, and her words made her the subject of many mommy blogs and landed her on Oprah, the target of what she calls the Bad Mother police. She was called evil, crazy, a menace. Some even urged that her children be taken away from her.

The incident didn't raise the national consciousness about the importance of keeping a marriage healthy while raising children;- it instead illuminated America's obsession with what Waldman calls "these varied archetypical manifestations of maternal evil." Our culture, it seems, loves a Bad Mother story. (Case in point: Britney Spears.) It gives the rest of us the opportunity to feel a little bit better about trying to do the impossible job of being a perfect mother.

**About Peggy Spear**  
Peggy Spear is editor of *Bay Area Parent*, East Bay and San Francisco/Peninsula editions. She is also a mother of three children, ages 17, 15 and 11. She is a veteran of piecing together a variety of summer activities for her kids, and with the exception a few sunburns and burnt bagel bites, has been pretty successful.