

Lesson in Living

Optimism

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Remember the question: is the glass half empty or half full? In other words, do we look at the glass optimistically or pessimistically? Why does the weatherman say there is a 20% chance of rain - why not an 80% chance of sunshine? We hear of the percentage of wayward youth - why not the percentage of wonderful youth?

One of the most optimistic people I have ever known was my grandmother, Barbara Phelps Allen. She gave birth to 12 children while she lived a rugged life on a dairy farm in Gilbert, Arizona. Her children were born as she sat on her husband's lap with the midwife assisting. In those days, teeth were removed with a pair of pliers; water was pumped from a well; clothes were boiled in large tin tubs, rinsed in bluing water and hung on the barbed wire fence to dry. Breakfast consisted of cracked wheat mush cooked on the large wooden stove and served with milk and sugar. Lunch was the big meal and often included potatoes & gravy. Supper was always the same: bread & milk. Their basic grains & milk diet was supplemented from the fruit trees surrounding their house and the vegetable garden she maintained.

Morning and evening prayers were always said as family members kneeled on their homemade, roughhewn chairs around the big, round, heavy table. Grandpa spent his noon resting and reading the Scriptures.

She lost two young children; the remaining ten grew to be strong, stalwart, well-educated men and women. All of them were optimistic. Why? Their mother was never without a smile and a song. Their home was filled with her homemade music as she whistled and sang. She was a happy spirit who spread joy around. To her, everyone and everything was always "just grand." She reminded me of the words from a children's song:

***"When you chance to meet a frown, do not let it stay
Quickly turn it upside down and smile the frown away.
No one likes a frowny face, change it to a smile
Make the world a better place by smiling all the while."***

At the end of W.W.II, my husband and I were left without a penny. Typical of my selfless grandparents, we were invited to live with them until we were back on our feet. During this six-month stay, a giant thunderstorm pelted us one black night. Grandpa & Grandma Allen were trying to grow turkeys but did not have the proper shelter for the birds. Instead of grieving over their drowning chicks, Grandma put them in her ample apron, carried them into the house, and put them in the oven to dry. They did not recover and this meant a substantial financial loss for them. But did she stop singing? No, instead, she belted out. "Count Your Many Blessings," louder & louder as she trotted back & forth emptying her apron of the sopping, dying fledglings.

During W.W.I, songs such as "Smiles," and "Pack Up Your Troubles," were the rage. During the depression years, we liked, "Now's the Time to Fall in Love." We needed to be lifted up and so we turned to optimistic music.



**WHAT WE ARE
GOING TO BE
WE ARE NOW BECOMING**

A baby is born. She looks so fresh, sweet and pure. The years go by and the babe waxes old. A history of her thoughts and character is written not only in her soul, but on her face. Wonder of wonders! What she has turned out to be she was preparing to be - all of her life!

Do we have any trouble telling what these ladies have been thinking about most of their lives? Which is the optimist and which is the pessimist? If we were a make-up artist, and wanted to change a younger person's face to look like either of these two, what would we have to do? If we were a portrait artist, and wanted to convey the optimist vs. the pessimist, what would we have to draw in order to portray this? Look in the mirror when we are smiling. Look in the mirror when we are frowning. Which expression do we want to be etched on our countenances as we grow older?

**Be a good-will ambassador
Be a living, vibrant, happy advertisement
Learn to be cheerful & optimistic**