



They Know More

Lessons we've learned from our grandparents

Two men cutting firewood

At the close of WWII in 1945, I had to make a choice: whether to go to work with my brother-in-law at his filling station or attend college on the G.I. bill. I talked it over with my grandfather.

"Well, son," he said, "let's look at it this way. Let's say two men have to cut a certain amount of firewood in a day. One of them gets out of bed early, picks up a dull chopping axe at the woodshed and rushes to the forest before sunrise. He puts in a long hard

day trying to produce his assigned quota of wood.

"Now the other guy gets up after a full night's rest, picks up his axe at the woodshed and spends some time sharpening it on a grinding stone. He then goes to the forest and begins work. In half the time and with much greater efficiency he produces even more wood than the other fellow with the dull axe."

Grandfather's message came to me loud and clear.

Howard E. Alley, Roswell, Ga., Haywood EMC

More than the piano

My grandmother, Mary Barker Brown, taught my sister and me how to play the piano. She was a music teacher from Ahoskie who taught children piano and organ after school in her living room. It was probably obvious to her after our first few lessons that her granddaughters had inherited little of her own musical abilities. But Grandma was a strong-willed woman, and she persisted in our weekly lessons through the 1960s.

She was one of seven children of an itinerant Methodist minister. She learned to play the classics and church music at home, but had a special love of show tunes during her later years. Every summer she would travel by Greyhound bus to New York City to see the latest shows and newly released movies. She brought back sheet music from the shows to share with her students.

I remember her enthusiastically playing "The Impossible Dream" from "The Man of La Mancha" and "You'll Never Walk Alone" from "Carousel."

My Grandma was an amazing woman who ran a profitable music school from her home. She was also an adventurous traveler. Her trips alone to New York to follow her passion surely took some courage for a widow in her seventh decade. She taught me to play the piano, but the way she lived her life was a lesson I will remember even more.

*Patti Carr, Virginia Beach
Carteret-Craven Electric*

Good things ain't cheap

My grandparents taught me what they thought was the true way of life and that was to be cheap. They taught me to buy the cheapest off-brand of many items such as milk, ice milk, butter and peanut butter, just to name a few. As I got older and did my own shopping, I learned that being cheap and buying off brand is not always the better route to take. My theory is "Best Is Better." As they say, cheap things ain't good, and good things ain't cheap.

Wanda Beamon, Mount Olive, Tri-County



Laugh

The best thing I learned from my grandmother was to laugh and to laugh deeply. It relieves pressure and lengthens your life.

She was one of those people who laughed way down deep inside, and everyone around her would begin to laugh, not knowing why they were laughing.

My grandmother broke up church on more than one occasion. She always sat in the middle way back in the sanctuary of her church. One Sunday, a lady who always sat on the second pew brought her grandson to church. During the worship service, this lady's grandson got fidgety, so she gave him her pocketbook. But instead of looking in it, he put it on his head! As his grandmother tried to get it off, the short handles got caught under his ear lobes and she just kept pulling with no success.

My grandmother, watching this whole mess, began laughing as quietly as possible. Being no small woman, her laughing convulsions began to shake the whole pew. Even after the pocketbook was removed from the boy, my grandmother must have continued to think about it, because throughout the rest of the service, she would begin laughing all over again.

I try to find something to laugh at every day. I know she did, and she lived for 99 years.

Wanda Garren, Lincolnton, Rutherford EMC

Mottos

My ears still ring with my Grandpa's many mottos. When we were repairing an old building, he'd say, "Nail it good. It will be no stronger than its weakest point." He would also say, "That first impression is a devil to change." So whether I was to meet someone for the first time, or had a task to do, I would try to make a great impression, or do a job well.

And when it wasn't well done and you tried to explain to Grandpa using the word "if," he would say, "There it is: the biggest little word in the dictionary. If you had the power of it, you could move mountains and rivers." Then with a diminutive smile he would add, "If a frog had wings, he wouldn't bump his rear." Only Grandpa didn't call the frog's bottom its rear.

F.G. McCormick, Yadkinville, Surry-Yadkin EMC

How to drive

I learned from my grandmother how to drive a car. I learned how when I was about 6 years old. I was outside and the keys were in the car, so I hopped in it and started driving, or at least trying to. My grandma came running out of the house, trying to chase down the car. She finally caught up to me, opened the door and snatched me out. It was the first time I had ever been spanked by my grandma.

Anthony Gaertner, Perquimans High School

Following through

In school, our teacher assigned "task cards" each day. I was a bit lazy sometimes, and I didn't always complete all of my work.

One Friday, I was so excited because my Big Daddy was picking me up from school. When I got into his old two-toned yellow pick-up truck, he asked me if I wanted ice cream. Of course I did! Then he asked if I had finished all my work. Uh oh! I replied, "Half of it."

We pulled out of the parking lot, drove down the street, and pulled over to the side of the road just in sight of the Tastee Freez. He stopped the truck, looked at me and said, "You did half your work, so we will go half way to the Tastee Freez."

He put the truck in gear, turned around and took me home. Nothing else was ever said about that "half-trip" to the ice cream parlor, but I still use his example with my children and students as an important lesson about following through with all responsibilities.

Leigh Anne Howard, Newport, Carteret Craven Electric



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Thanks to everyone who sent us stories about grandparents. We wish we had space to publish more. Next month we'll publish photos and stories of the tackiest lawn ornaments you ever saw. {Deadline was Jan. 15}.

send us your best **EARN \$50**

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

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What would go inside your dream home? Already there? Send photos.

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Send stories of those exercise routines or machines that really didn't do any good.

Deadline: April 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 800 pixels.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
E-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Online: www.carolinacountry.com

Say what you feel

When I was 11, my mom and I lived with my Mam-maw Blankenship. She was an in-home aid and spent most of her time working. It was the day before Thanksgiving when Mam-maw came home unexpectedly. We sat down at the table and talked about the past few days. She had been very sick.

She looked at me with the saddest of eyes and said, "Why don't you love me? You never just hug or kiss me like my other grandchildren."

I didn't know what to say. I had a huge lump in my throat, thinking that my Mam-maw believed I did not love her. I did love her. She was the greatest!

Later on that night, my Mam-maw passed away. At the hospital, they allowed two at a time to say our good-byes. My sister and I went in, but no words would come out—only tears. I never really got to tell her.

No matter how difficult it is, you should always let your loved ones know how much they mean to you.

Karen Stroud, Hiddenite, EnergyUnited

Don't chase mother hens

My Grandpa and Grandma Tilley lived in rural Richmond County in Ellerbe. They lived in an old farmhouse there in the Sandhills in the 1950s. They didn't have running water and had to draw up their water from the well. They had a cow that they milked daily. I remember very well my Grandma using the churn to make butter. They also had plenty of chickens running around. I remember my Grandpa cutting off the rooster's head and the chicken would still run around. I don't really remember the chicken meal that followed. I do remember chasing around a mama hen who had a bunch of biddies, and I really remember being flogged by the mama hen. At age 5, it was a terrifying experience to be jumped on by a mad chicken. My Grandpa told me never to chase a chicken who had biddies. I listened and have not been attacked since then.

Carolyn Thompson, Mt. Gilead, Randolph EMC


Recycle and reuse

My grandmother taught me to be green when green was just a color. She placed water barrels under the eaves of her house, so when it rained they filled with water. She then used this water to wash her clothes outside in a large pot. Once the water cooled, she used this same water to water her garden. The suds in the water helped to repel bugs. Any bugs left after this treatment she picked off by hand.

She didn't buy paper, but instead recycled ever piece of paper she received. When she got a present, she would carefully fold the paper for later use.

She used newspaper margins to write lists or to line cabinets.

Food always got a second life as a new dish. She did not buy any processed foods other than flour, sugar, coffee and syrup.

Her methods have never been more useful and helpful than now. I am using the very techniques my grandmother used to stretch out resources and I am thankful I had her to learn from. 

Paula Sauls, Fremont, Tri-County EMC

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