

## **Growing Up With Granny**

**Her lectures and stories were harsh, but her scolding wisdom and tough love left a lasting impression.**

**By Ashley A. Davis**

**For the Opelika-Auburn News**

**Packing my entire room for college was tough on June 24, 2004. I could barely see through the wall of fiery tears that clouded my vision of the U-Haul. Granny and Papa sat on the porch, heavily waving, while I prepared to depart. Not spending the summer with Granny in the backwoods of Blyville, Ark., would definitely be a new experience. My first summer away from Granny and my parents' home in Anniston, Ala., would be unfamiliar. Instead of celebrating high school graduation with Granny, I was on my way to summer school in Auburn, Ala.**

**To this day, I call Granny and reminisce about our hot, long summers of catching lightning bugs and eating watermelon. Regardless of how many times I attend summer school, Granny is always there and will constantly remind me that "It's not how long ya'll complete the task, but that ya'll finish it, gal."**

**As I drove down the hot road that day, the words "You taught me everything and anything that I could be" blared from the radio. These words are the opening of the 1996 Boys to Men song, "Mama." The song immediately brings the image of my Granny to mind.**

**My Granny, Georgia Idela Neal, was the rock of our family who persistently snapped us back to reality, and reminded us of all our blessings. "Young people**

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don't know nothing about hard times or Jesus," is Granny's constant saying after her spill of advice. This 5-foot-2-inch round lady would go on for days about how I would make a big deal out of nothing. Her smallest worry while growing up in rural Arkansas was whether she'd have enough food to eat. Can you image what her biggest worry may have been?

According to Granny, my worries were just spoiled luxuries that needed constant fulfillment and attention. Begging for Granny not to get rid of my first, pulled tooth was just "a way of being greedy." I was "scared to grow up and accept a loss as a gain." At four years old, I doubt I understood that money could buy a lot more than a tooth.

My complaints of bloating and cramps from the teenage arrival of womanhood were "a sign of health and strength." According to Granny, I should "be thanking God that it's not a sign of cancer, or that it's missing in action due to early pregnancy."

My anxiety attacks from the summer heat of band camp were nothing compared to Granny's shiny, black image bent over a sack of freshly picked cotton. Being in the sun was a "treat" for me, especially compared to Granny's "Pick cotton or starve" way of life. "I have to do what I must in order to get the desires of my heart," Granny said. In her case, the sun was an obstacle towards the goal of obtaining money for food. For me, the sun contributed to sweat washing away my makeup, while I tried to look cute during the hottest portion of marching band.

Born in the 1920s, Granny's generation undeniably experienced hardships.

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**Her generation has endured from the Great Depression to the attack on the World Trade Center. Each unbelievable event has made Granny's generation appreciate life more. These hardships, especially those from the Civil Rights Movement, are a constant reminder to enjoy the little things in life and never take them for granted.**

**At a young age, I may not have fully understood the logic behind Granny's stories or viewpoints. However, as I reflect two years later on Grandparents Day, I realize the actual hidden message behind Granny's dramatic life stories.**

**My thoughts revert to a quote I read in a family magazine.**

**"Grandparents Day celebrates the positive contributions, dedication and persistence expressed by grandparents across the country," said Mrs. Marian McQuade, founder of Grandparents Day.**

**During her speech, she must have been thinking of Granny because Granny was definitely dedicated towards distinguishing a stressful hardship from a spoiled privilege.**

**From Granny's stories and aggravated tone, I have learned that life is too short to stress over things that I have no control over. I should consider every challenge as an opportunity to grow physically and mentally stronger. Every task opens doors to limitless opportunities. Most importantly, I am blessed and should thank God for what I own and have experienced in life. After all, some people may never receive the opportunity to experience band, college, or hardships that help build character and increase intelligence.**

**From Granny's perspective, "It's all about where you've been, where you're**

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**going and how you plan to get there.” I have been lectured, pointed in the right direction towards success and received help from Granny on how to obtain a college education. Because of Granny, I will be able to see the bigger picture from the “lessons of life.” I understand now, Granny. You have shared your knowledge and made your impact on me. Now it is time that I have an impact on someone else.**

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