

Granny Gloria's Lemonade - Aaron Hinzman
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2008 Barbara W. Walters Memorial College Scholarship

She made the best lemonade of anyone on the block, and she always served it with a bendable straw. She kept her antique candy dish filled with pink lozenges, the kind elderly persons love. On summer days, while neighborhood children sipped her cool lemonade and nibbled snack crackers, she gladly told stories of bygone days. Listening to her tales of farm life, hard work and incredible morals served to teach eager young minds.

When asked about her younger days, she would immediately get a twinkle in her eyes and begin spinning tales that spanned 84 years. She told of her first love and of her son, of the pride she felt when he graduated college at a time few had the opportunity to finish high school. She chuckled as she recalled stories of her favorite pets and farm animals.

Her name was Gloria, and she had knack for growing enormous tomato plants. Each night, about sundown, she carried her water jug and an old battered saucepan to her porch garden to quench the thirst of her plants. The vines clung to the railing with worn-out panty hose; a technique she said was gentler to the tender vines than rope or string. Although her methods of gardening seemed rugged, it might have been her singing and talking that caused the vines to flourish. One summer in particular, her only vine produced over 100 ripe, juicy tomatoes. Gloria counted her "crops" and beamed with pride while telling her neighbors of her success as she shared the fruits of her labor. It took little in life to bring joy and pleasure to this uncomplicated woman. She spent untold hours rocking in her mother's old, oaken chair. She sang and hummed while she rocked, even when she was alone. It was as if the rhythm of

the chair coupled with the rhythm of her songs brought comforting memories to her mind. She kept inspirational books on her coffee table and referred to them daily. Gloria seldom displayed a poor mood or attitude. She attributed this to the fact that she faced much adversity in the past and yet each struggle made her wiser and stronger.

She committed poetry to memory and recited verses upon request. When asked to speak at church, she would gladly say, "Oh dear, I'll have to pick a good one. Give me a day to look through my books."

She was very particular about the right poem or limerick for the occasion. When she stood behind the pulpit, she commonly said, "Excuse my shaky voice, I'm not as young as I used to be. But pray for me, and God will guide me through as I recite these words." One could see the faith in her eyes, and almost everyone would be in tears by the time she finished.

Although her walk had become feeble and her hands shaky, her mind remained sharp allowing a strong grasp on reality. Gloria lived through numerous changes and witnessed many inventions, but remained steadfast in the belief that all she needed was a good book and a comfortable chair to be truly content. She was proud of her country and its progress, and yet she never allowed herself to become engulfed by the world and all the conveniences that it offered.

Most days, her freshly washed laundry hung on the line in her back yard, and she continued to pull the weeds along her sidewalks. She seemed to get the most pleasure from a hard day's work. The children in the neighborhood watched in awe, saying, "GEEZ, does she ever take a break?" Most of them had never seen such work ethic.

Never complaining of the heat or sun beating on her back, never depending on air conditioning to comfort her, she continued to labor. While wiping her brow with a ragged handkerchief, she sang, "What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see..."

Gloria was from a different time: a time when nothing was taken for granted, a time before soda pop, electronics and fast food. She never experienced a date to the movies or shopping at the mall. She did not mind, for she was content to walk down a country path, to hoe in her garden, or to rake leaves in the fall. She was happy rocking, watching the sunset, listening to the birds sing, and sipping lemonade.

Because she showed them true love and respect, all the children on the block began to call her "Granny Gloria." It did not matter that her meager income did not allow her to lavish them with gifts on holidays ... her homemade fudge held love for each child. They did not mind that birthday cards only held a dollar or two; it was Granny Gloria's' hugs that were priceless. She rarely had the slightest sniffle, but one day Gloria became quite ill. Begrudgingly she allowed a neighbor to take her to the hospital. No one knew exactly what happened, other than she never came home again. Some of the children in the neighborhood asked their parents questions, but no one had an answer. She grew weaker and weaker, and after some time, she simply stopped breathing. Her long, laborious life was over.

That was many years ago. The children on her block have grown and moved away. Her small home is filled with the love and laughter of a new family. Her sidewalk is now trimmed with a weed eater; her porch garden where tomatoes once grew is filled with colorful flowers. On hot summer days, it is said that if one listens closely, one can hear her voice softly singing in the breeze: a breeze that hints of freshly washed laundry.

Gloria may have left this earth, but she left behind a lasting impression on uncountable lives and memories of simpler times. Anyone who knew and loved her would admit... lemonade has never tasted the same since Gloria left home.