

## **Ruby Kuns Simmons: A Family's Reflections<sup>1</sup>**

On behalf of Grandma's family, I welcome each of you who have joined us in our celebration of her life. In preparing, it struck me that there was little I could add or detract from the blessed memories that Grandma left with each and every one of us. This then is a unique challenge: to convey something of substance, while admittedly telling you nothing that you don't already know. Invariably, then, I will be brief.

To understand what Grandma gave to us, her family and friends, it helps to understand what we are otherwise without. It is with some reluctance that I concede that my children and their generation have learned much about their world, and their lives...learned too much assuredly... through something called the Internet. My siblings and I, and our cousins, were indoctrinated by television, with the likes of "The Brady Bunch" and "Gilligan's Island." My parents, uncles and aunts viewed the world, to a thankfully lesser degree, through the looking glass of radio and the daily newspaper.

All told, our views of the world, accurate or not, were certainly influenced to some degree.

In contrast, apart from being born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's infancy, and before the significant technological changes she experienced in her life's eleven decades, Grandma was a true pioneer, from nearly the time of her birth until she met her beloved Goodrich, my grandfather. In being a part of early, undeveloped Glendale, Arizona, and then Imperial Valley, she and her family had the courage to undertake challenges others did not, and it was through this sacrifice that she became the person that few were capable of becoming, and today, may well be unable to become. Her world was not given to her; it was hers to observe for what it was. "Life" and its trappings were not dictated by others, but were scripted with the pen of her experience. You could say that discovery, entertainment, comedy, and drama were not cable network names to young Ruby, they were figments of her own creation.

The songs she sang were those she authored. The games she played were those she invented. The world she lived in was just that.

My point is that Grandma's wisdom and insight cannot be accounted for merely by longevity. She was blessed by her ability to see the world, to see people, and to experience all things for what they were at that moment. For example, where most of us saw only a tree, Grandma found and befriended a majestic, living companion, relished its strength, beauty and resolve, and was overwhelmed that God would see fit to provide her the moments she embraced with His creation. She never took friends, family and her community for granted, and treasured every moment with each of them. Even in more mundane matters, such as where most of us would see a water faucet, Grandma told me that she was humbled that water would seemingly

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<sup>1</sup> This work embodies the thoughts, reflections and observations of numerous family members in celebration of the legacy of Ruby Kuns Simmons.

wait “at-the-ready” for her there, all day and all night, and come to her the instant she summoned it, and in any temperature she would select merely with the turn of a knob. Even in the experiences that all of us would view as special...sunsets, walks along the beach, glacial ice falling to the sea...we all knew that Grandma was more connected to, more related to, and more involved in them than any of us could ever hope to be.

Grandma wasn't a mere spectator in the splendor of our existence. She was an active participant.

Her connection to the world, and beyond that, her faith in God bestowed Grandma with an extraordinary contentment in purpose and destiny, and it was that which gave rise to the palpable joy which I suspect is what all of us will remember the most. Her favorite days were Sundays, of course, and she would sit among us, the majority of whom are less than half her age, and sing louder, clap more enthusiastically, and rejoice more than any of us. What wonderful memories were created within these walls!

To describe her in a more general way, Grandma possessed the gift of gratitude, to a degree rarely recounted by history, and undoubtedly, beyond that which most are capable. In observing this, I don't mean “gratitude” in the hollow, polite vernacular people express unthinkingly. No, I mean that Grandma was truly grateful in heart without her needing to tell us as much. It was in her being. You could hear it in her words, you could see it in her eyes, and it was unmistakable in her demeanor and action. It was her gift to us all.

Throughout her life, Grandma led by example, even if unbeknownst to us. What she taught was brilliant in its simplicity: we are, each of us, already that which we long to be.<sup>2</sup> We already have all that we could possibly need. We have already achieved that which we set out to do, were we only to take the time to reflect on our accomplishments, rather than on our shortcomings.

Uncluttered by the influence of technology, we too would know...and in fact, do know... what Grandma did; that by living each day in the moment – appreciating who we are and what we have right now – then that moment can be seen for what it is, the most magnificent moment of our lives. Today...right now...we are celebrating Grandma, and this is the most magnificent moment in each of our lives. Still, if we choose to live as Grandma did, the majesty of this moment will soon be surpassed by the next, and the next, and the next...until each of us

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<sup>2</sup> The concept that “you are already that which you long to be” truly epitomized Grandma Ruby's philosophy and example, in view of her unwavering contentment in who and what she was. Nor is it an entirely novel observation in any event. Nevertheless, in fairness, the idea to include this concept came from one of the authors' recent reading of Finding Clarity: A Guide To the Deeper Levels of Your Being, which is a compilation of materials inspired by the teachings of Jeru Kabbal (North Atlantic Books 2006). We wish to be clear that Grandma Ruby had no knowledge of Jeru Kabbal, and in no way subscribed to his teachings and they are not endorsed in this context. It is neither the time nor the place. Rather, we are solely borrowing from the literacy of others. As observed by the Nobel Prize-winning author, Anatole France: “When a thing has been said and well, have no scruple. Take it and copy it.”

celebrates our 105<sup>th</sup> birthday. What a fabulous life was Grandma's and like her, may our gratitude for the gift of her lasting example transcend the word "gratitude" itself.

In closing, today, we ought not dwell on our cherished memories from the past, for they are already ours to keep forever. We also need not lament a future in Grandma's absence. Instead, what we will find if we live right now, in this moment as she did, is that Grandma is here, literally and figuratively, within us all.