



Grammy, *my greatest mentor*

By Amy-Jean Polster

There are many people one might admire throughout their life. I try to have a variety of mentors in my life but the person I admire the most is Grammy, my grandmother. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” The person I know who has lived her life according to these words is my grandmother. She is my greatest mentor because she lives an exemplary life and is the person I strive to become.

My grandmother grew up in Pennsylvania and was born into a Baptist family, and later became an Anglican. During the Second World War my grandmother grew to realise that she believed all war was wrong. At the University of Philadelphia she was one of the few women to graduate with a Bachelor of Mathematics and Sciences. By her twenty-first birthday, she married. And soon together, my grandparents became Quakers, a religion they felt better expressed their ideals. My grandmother is a great supporter of equality and was the President of the Women’s League for Peace and Freedom movement in the U.S. She was involved

in Martin Luther Kings’ walk for freedom in Alabama that had thousands

of participants. It was dangerous at that time to be a white woman supporting black equality in the U.S. and she was the victim of death threats and abuse but she never let this deter her.

My grandmother’s work did not end with equality. With the start of the Vietnam war she continued her call for peace. This work was especially difficult for my grandmother’s children who were picked on relentlessly for being unpatriotic and communist lovers because of my grandmother’s controversial views. The strain was so great on pacifist children during that era that many did not know what to do. As a result my father’s best friend killed himself at age 13. With their sons approaching draft age, and the difficulties in the States, my grandparents decided to move to Canada.

They moved to Argenta, a small community in the interior of BC, to live simply. Here they built their house and became teachers at the local Quaker school. Later, my grandfather passed away after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. My grandmother has continued her

work for peace and equality, setting an example for me and her other grandchildren. She is a leader and example, and through many times of conflict her patient, diplomatic and loving attitude has served as guidance for everyone.

My grandmother is my greatest mentor and influence and I strive to live my life as she has. Her love and support are an integral part of who I have become. In the words of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “The basic sources of happiness are a good heart, compassion, and love. If we have these mental attitudes, even if we are surrounded by hostility, we feel little disturbance. On the other hand, if we lack compassion and our mental state is filled with anger or hatred we will not have peace.” Like all of us my grandmother is not perfect; however, I truly believe she is one of few who have managed to achieve this of which the Dalai Lama speaks. She is a model of a good heart, compassion and love, and for this she is my greatest mentor. ☺

NOTE: THIS WAS WRITTEN FOR THE PREMIER’S AWARD SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION, WHICH I WAS AWARDED IN SEPTEMBER 2004 BY GORDON CAMPBELL. I GUESS THEY WERE AS IMPRESSED WITH MY MENTOR AS I AM.

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