

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, GRATITUDE AND A POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

AGING GRACEFULLY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By: Margie Egbert Edwards

I learned to read in the first grade. I treasured my “book mark” with a brightly colored star for each of the books I read. These are reminders of three behaviors that have contributed to my personal success, and they are: self- responsibility, gratitude and a sense of humor. I learned that I was responsible for my own reading progress. I was grateful for the education I received, and I learned to not take myself too seriously.

My parents also provided opportunities for me to practice these three behaviors. I remember farm chores -- feeding chickens; gathering and casing eggs; weeding, thinning and topping beets — to name a few. I am grateful for the work ethic established in those early years; for the emphasis on being a responsible worker; and for the money I earned and learned to manage. I also learned to laugh at myself when I looked in the mirror and viewed my dirt stained face at the end of the day’s work.

I’m grateful for household chores. Every Saturday morning I churned our cow’s cream to butter. “Churning” was my responsibility, and as I churned, I was entertained by radio broadcasts of “Let’s Pretend”, making this chore “fun”. Throughout these life experiences, my sense of humor was enhanced. When, as an adult, I put salt instead of sugar into the cream I was whipping for Thanksgiving pies, I laughed, and continued to whip that cream until it turned to butter—while someone else made a fast trip to 7-11 for more whipping cream.

It’s gratitude that leads me to enroll in university classes where I am informed on current topics such as ethics, political science, nutrition and foreign languages. Participating in class discussions, completing assignments on time, and achieving good grades continue to be important to me. I have learned to value the opinions of the more “traditional” students, and to laugh at myself when I am not as competent with the “computers” and other “techie” tools as they are.

When my sewing service activities lead to “mis-adventures”, I laugh, unpick, and count my blessings, in that I was not required to be a seamstress to make my living. I am grateful, however, for the opportunity to learn new skills, and to contribute quilts to our “community family” -- for children, refugees, hospital patients, and others.

I am overwhelmingly grateful to my parents, family, friends and community. Through these associations I have learned to value each of the adventures and misadventures in my life. These experiences have served me well in the past. They have furthered my positive approach to life — an approach that reinforces personal responsibility, gratitude, and laughter. And there is no doubt in my mind that these behaviors will continue to serve me well as I meet the challenges of the 21st Century.