

Everything I Need to Know in Life I Learned from My Grandmother

BY Derrick Jones

For the past year and half, I've been making monthly trips back to my hometown of Springfield, Illinois, to see my aging grandmother. The trips were prompted, in part, by a "field trip" to the hospital in February 2005, and a series of subsequent "field trips" in the months that followed. My grandmother, Mary F. Jones, isn't getting any younger and the 800 miles between Springfield and Washington, D.C., mean I don't get to spend every day with her like I did growing up.

Last month, instead of me going to her, she came to me. Along with my mother who volunteers for National Right to Life every year at the convention, my grandmother made the six-hour drive from Springfield to Nashville to spend the week. My grandmother celebrated her 90th birthday in April.

Our time together in Nashville reminded of the many things I learned from her when I was growing up. My mother has worked nights my entire life and Grandma was my built-in babysitter. If mom was sleeping and grandmother needed to go somewhere, she just brought me along.

It was not until much later that I learned that these important lessons did not end when I left home. As Grandma grows older, she continues to teach my mother and me lessons that are as enduring as the human spirit.

Each Person Deserves Honor and Respect

Last September, my mother left her job of 26 years to be my grandmother's full-time caregiver. Though Grandma is still capable of doing things for herself, some tasks require assistance.

We know that no matter what stage of life—from the tiniest human embryo to the elders of our society and everywhere in between, and no matter what degree of ability or disability—each and every person has an inherent dignity that we recognize and respect. We must redouble our efforts to instill this most fundamental value in the hearts and minds of Americans.

You're Never Too Old to Learn

My grandmother can certainly be considered a veteran of the pro-life movement and the issues facing it. But the 2006 convention afforded her the chance to learn more. She spent the better part of the drive to Nashville figuring out which workshops she wanted to attend.

And though keeping up a full convention schedule, with its early mornings and late nights, was physically taxing on her, she was there ready to learn and take the knowledge back to Springfield and put it to use. In order to win, we must continually educate ourselves on the latest developments affecting the pro-life movement and continue to educate our communities.

Persevere and Overcome Every Obstacle

Though my grandmother can still walk, albeit slowly, it would have been too much to make the trek from her hotel room to the convention floor every day. Instead, mom brought along the wheelchair they keep around the house “just in case,” giving Grandma the ability to attend everything she wanted without getting worn out too quickly.

Pro-lifers face obstacles and roadblocks at every turn—pro-abortion politicians, an aggressively pro-abortion media, anti-life state and local government policies, millions upon millions of dollars given to pro-abortionists—and still we persevere and win. We must continue to use the truth, which is on our side, and our collective talents and creativity to reach the public with our message

No Task Is Too Great or Too Small

Some of my earliest memories are of stuffing envelopes at the Life Center in Springfield, manning shifts at the right to life booth at the state fair, and tagging along as Grandma took some of the girls from St. Monica’s Maternity Home to their prenatal appointments.

That taught me that everything we do makes a difference. Everything we do advances our cause. Though often the work is far from glamorous and the tasks seem either too large and daunting or menial and insignificant, we must continue on knowing that through everything we do, we are all working together to save lives.

The Pro-Life Movement Is a Family Affair

The pro-life movement truly is a family affair. That is true for grandmother, my mother, and me—and for tens of thousands of other families just like us. An analogy comparing our movement to a family business has been used by many of us who came of age in the Teens for Life movement. It holds true.

The torch is being passed to a new generation (many of us were born into the Movement), who are ready and eager to pick up the fight to save lives. Our opponents continue to lose steam as more and more younger Americans are Choosing Life.

The Battle Continues and Their Legacy Remains

The battle to fight legalized abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia began in many states prior to the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. It began around kitchen tables and in living rooms just like my grandmother’s.

They were the pioneers who drew a line in the sand and said “No!” For more than 33 years they have given over all their energies to righting this terrible wrong.

We are slowly losing members of that first great generation, but their work continues through the next generation whom they raised and trained. Our work builds on what they started.

They worked tirelessly to save lives and recruit more to the cause. We will and we must continue to build upon that legacy for as long as it takes.

Thank you, Grandma, for all that you taught me.