



Gram: A Life Without Measure

THE HENLEY FAMILY PAYS TRIBUTE TO A SPECIAL LIFE

Gram: A Life Without Measure

THE HENLEY FAMILY PAYS TRIBUTE TO A SPECIAL LIFE

Editor: Judith Kolva, Ph. D.
Memoir Shoppe
www.memoirshoppe.com
Designer: cj Madigan
Shoebox Scanning & Design
www.shoeboxscanning.biz

Text copyright © 2008 Judith L. Kolva
Photos from the personal archives of and
copyright © Judith L. Kolva and cj Madigan
respectively
Photo collage on page 5 courtesy of
Lisa Kagan, Lisa Kagen Designs,
www.LisaKaganDesigns.com
Page design copyright © 2008 cj Madigan

*To the Henley clan
past, present, and future*

Gram: A Life Without Measure

Although Gram's life was ordinary, it was extraordinary. It wasn't a life you'd bring home in a brown paper bag. Instead, you'd wrap it in cherry red paper, tie it with a huge gold bow, and sign the gift card with a flourish: *A gift to treasure forever.*

Gram, more than anyone I've known, lived life to its fullest. She treasured each day, each hour, each moment. She was a lovely lady—the high priestess of laughter and love. To Gram, life was robust. She never complained. She never criticized. She never condemned. Gram looked for satin, not seams.

Gram fussed over her family's creature comforts. She accepted us. She treasured us. She bragged about us. She loved us unconditionally. It's not that she didn't recognize our faults. She did. But she loved us, warts and all. As a result, we never wanted to disappoint her. Although Gram didn't judge us, we did our best to “measure up.”

Gram's greatest fault was, ironically, also her greatest virtue. Gram had the rare gift of being a good listener. She loved to talk with us about our lives. Actually, she welcomed our conversations. We'd go to Gram with our stories, our problems, our triumphs, and even our true confessions. No matter what we wanted to talk about, Gram poured coffee, plated one of her freshly baked treats, pulled chairs up to the kitchen table, and listened. Gram told us time and time again, “God gave you two ears and one mouth for a good reason.”

Now that Gram has passed, we realize that although she was a wonderful storyteller, we only know snippets of her life story. Yes, we intended to learn about her life. We put it on the *Someday List*. Then, convinced that all was well, we went whistling merrily and obliviously

through the days, weeks, months, and years. There's no excuse. We simply allowed life to reel by and do-si-do around.

Suddenly, the *Someday* wakeup call rang. But it wasn't the call we wanted to answer. It was too late. Gram was dead. The family lamented, "If only we knew more. If only we had taken Gram's advice and listened." But there's no going back. Instead, we did all we could do. The family rallied and decided to preserve the few treasures we do have—the stories and recipes that honor Gram's life, a life without measure.

Our advice to others is this: Life passes quickly. It's like a stone skipped across water. It makes ripples and then disappears into an unknown depth. Don't become a victim of the *Someday List* syndrome. Don't *Someday* wail, "If only we knew more." You never know what will happen next year, next month, next week, or even tomorrow. Don't play roulette with the universe. Start now. Talk to the Gram in your life, and make her past your present to the future.



The Henley Women: Down Through the Generations

**Cindy Henley Sims
Granddaughter
October 2007**

The Cyclone

Aunt Lea was of Irish heritage. Everyone knows the Irish have full, undisputed, rights to the art of blarney. I was never sure if Aunt Lea's stories were true or if they were a tad embellished. Nonetheless, I loved them all. The story about how she

and her family traveled from Texas to Michigan was especially, well, can you say "intriguing"? Even if the story was sanctioned with a storyteller's license, her brown bread never lacked a delicious authenticity.

I can still hear Aunt Lea's soft voice ...

The day dawned like all Texas days. An unforgiving sun beat down on our heads. Nothing stirred except pesky bugs and ever-swinfting dust. My brothers and I quarreled more than usual.

We thought Dad called us to the running board of our Model T pickup to scold us. We were wrong. Dad slumped on the running board. I couldn't believe my eyes. Tears made paths through the dust on his cheeks. Dad never cried. He told us Mom was in the hospital and would probably die.

I knew Mom was pregnant and not feeling well. But she couldn't die. She was my mom. What would I do? What would my brothers do? What would my dad do? Mom was gentle, but she was the strength of our family. She was the glue of love that held us together. I thought my heart would break.

Finally, Mom was released from the hospital. I didn't understand what "peritonitis" meant. All I knew was Mom lost the baby, and she was still sick. All I cared was she was home, and she wasn't going to die. My brothers and I did our best to "be good." But it was hard to live up to our promise when we developed boils. They itched, festered, and ran. We whined, fussed, and complained. Dad couldn't find work. Mom was bothered by the heat and bugs. It was time to go home to our farm in Michigan.

We joined a caravan of four other north-bound families. My brother Pete, who was twelve, drove our 1914 Model T pickup truck. Mom and Dad rode beside him in the front seat. Bruce and I jostled along in the truck's bed. The sun beat on our bare heads and road dust choked our throats. But we didn't care. As far as we were concerned, we occupied first class



The North-bound Henleys, Circa 1921

Cindy Henley Shaw, Niece

seats. Our tickets entitled us to unlimited access to the dining car. We gorged ourselves on the raw bacon, brown bread, and beans Mom stored in the truck's bed until Dad's switch made it clear we were not the VIP's we pretended to be. We were second-class passengers riding coach and had better dump our airs.

At dusk, our caravan halted beside the road, where we set up camp. The men pitched tents. My mom and the other women lit an open bonfire, so they could cook supper. The kids were free to play games until it was time to eat. My brothers and I didn't own toys so our entertainment was left to our imaginations. One evening, we decided to amuse ourselves with *Ami I Over*. All was great fun until the rock we were using for the ball smashed through the window of the car we were using for the wall. We weren't "spoiled brats." We certainly didn't mean any harm and could never understand why the folks who owned the car abandoned our caravan.

As we chugged further north, the terrain and vegetation became more familiar. Like a horse heading to its familiar barn, we just wanted to get home. But the weather had other plans. We were close to Chicago when the cyclone hit. Trees were uprooted, roads closed, and debris flew everywhere. We were terrified. A kind family allowed us to take refuge in their barn until the storm passed.

Brown Bread

2 cups Milk
7/8 " Molasses
1 Tea sp Salt (level)
1 " " Soda (heaping)
 dissolved in 1/2 cup hot water
1 cup Wheat Flour
2 1/2 " Graham "

Mix all together well
Steam One hour
Bake five minutes.

with 6.

We huddled in the hay and stared, sightless, into the black night. A nighthawk's sharp, "EEEEEE," whistled through the darkness. A hoot owl answered, "WHOOO . . . WHOOO are YOUUU?" Suddenly, the barn-door creaked open, and there stood our eldest brother Jack. How could this be? Jack was an attorney in Nebraska. There was no explanation. It was a miracle. I spent the rest of the trip lying on my back, staring up at the puffy clouds, and weaving intricate, magical tales about how the cyclone blew Jack to us.

Ripples

Pies

Banana Pie

Bake single crust
1 pint Milk (heat)
2 Egg yolks } combine
2 Cup Sugar } + 1
2 Tab. sp. Cornstarch }
dissolved in a little cold water
1 Tea sp. Butter
1/4 - - - Salt
Combine all and
Cook until thick
When cool add
1/2 cup of Vanilla
2 Bananas sliced and
cover with beaten Egg white.
Brown in oven.
Mrs. W.A. Johnson

Chocolate Pie

Bake single crust
4 Tab. sp. Flour
2 1/2 - - - Cocoa
1 - - - Sugar } combine
1 - - - Butter }
1/4 Tea - Salt }
1 pint Boiling water
Cook until thick
1 Teaspoon Vanilla
Cover with Egg white or
Whipped Cream

I treasure Mom's stories. But because this one captures her inner-most feelings, it's my favorite. Each time I treat myself to her decadent chocolate pie, which is frequently, I think of my mom and the legacy she left to her family.

I can still hear Mom's soft voice... It was a chamber of commerce Easter morn. Sun filtered through the church's stained glass window. Special red velvet cushions smuggled on the walnut pews. The altar was draped in royal purple and adorned with dozens of aromatic white lilies. The congregation was bedecked in splendid Easter bonnets complete with their required frills. The warmth of fellowship saturated the pre-service, "Good Mornings." What a glorious day for a baptism.

Our plan was to celebrate the baptism, and then go home and enjoy our traditional Easter dinner of ham, potato salad, garden-fresh peas, homemade yeast rolls, and the family's all-time favorite

chocolate pie. Two year-old June (that would be me!) had other ideas. Hymns were sung. The black-robed choir raised glorious hosannas. Pastor delivered a powerful sermon. Gold offering plates were passed. And, now, it was time for the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The usher approached our pew, and as we rose to "Come forth little children," my little child screamed at the top of her lungs, "NOOOO! NOOOO! NOOOO!"

Eventually I discovered the truth. It seems Grandpa Henley informed his granddaughter that she would be dunked in a pail of cold water. Well, said granddaughter wanted no part of a dunking and wasn't at all shy about sharing her piercing protests with the entire congregation. What was I to do but grab June and yank her and her screams out the back door?

I didn't think much about church for another fifteen years. But one Sunday for a reason I can't explain, I felt compelled to get out of bed, dress in my Sunday-best, and attend a service at our local Lutheran church. This decision literally changed my life.

Shortly after that day, I joined the church. My church family is now my extended family. When life is painful, they circle the wagons and protect my heart and my soul. I will always be grateful for how my church family helped me through the ordeal of Jim's funeral. My church family took care of the details I couldn't begin to deal with—the flowers,

June Henley Corona, Daughter

the service, and the luncheon all soothed my wounded spirit. The hugs reached out and proclaimed, "We love you. We are here for you."

I look forward to Sunday mornings. I kneel at the altar, bow my head, and open my heart to the inner meaning—inner peace—church contributes to my life. The Sunday service prepares me for the week ahead. My spiritual life reminds me of the marvel of the world around me and helps me appreciate God's creations. I love my Pastor Mike and the friends I see each Sunday. Without church, my life would be empty.

Recently, June asked me, "Mother, what gives meaning to your life?" She continually challenges me with her queries. Most times, I manage to dodge her determination. But on this occasion, June's piercing green eyes demanded an answer I contemplated. My answer came to me in the form of a prayer—the prayer I leave to you as my legacy:

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not
So much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Life passes quickly. It is like a stone skipped across water. It makes ripples and then disappears into an unknown depth. My fervent hope is the ripples I leave behind help others. This, my dear family and friends, is my legacy for you.



June Henley, 1948

Truth Sermons, Grandpa Style

My Gram was the best storyteller, ever. After dinner we'd sit around the table, eat her strawberry shortcake topped with mountains of whipped cream, and listen to her stories. One of my favorites is about the time my grandpa found my great uncle Tyler. I loved my grandpa. He taught his kids and his grandkids the value of hard work, how to conduct our lives with honor, and to always tell the truth. His truth sermon, however, did allow a bit of leeway. We learned it wasn't a sin to

embellish a bit whenever we had the opportunity to tell a story.

Like Gram, my grandpa wove marvelous tales. My cousins and I never failed to giggle when we heard why Grandpa was bald. Apparently one fine spring day he fell asleep under a maple tree. A resourceful cow bird spied her opportunity. She swooped down,

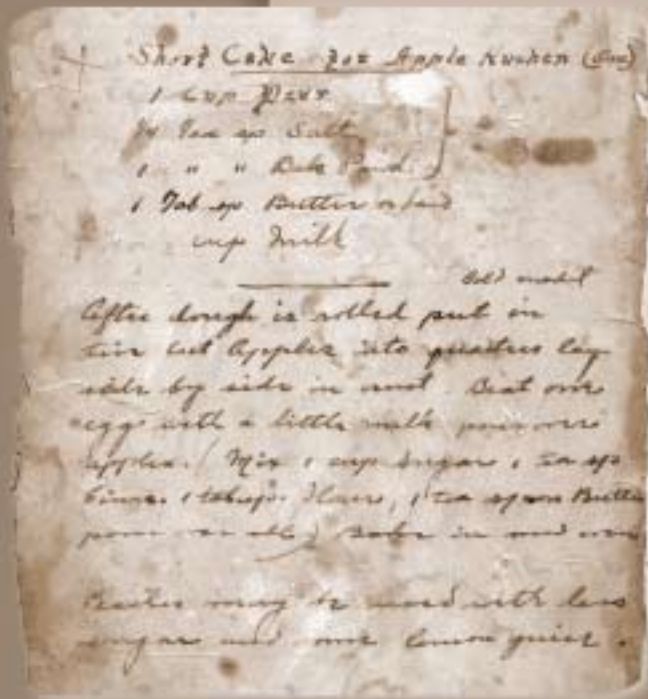
plucked off his hair, and zoomed away with the perfect lining for her nest.

We were never quite sure if, indeed, the reason Grandpa never made it to Beaver Island was because he'd start swimming, make it half-way, then he'd get tired. What was he to do but turn around and swim back? Nor, could we figure out why Grandpa was so smart. He only went to school two days in his entire life. And those two days were quite traumatic. The first day the school house burned. The second day the teacher died.

But the real mystery was when and where Grandpa was born. How could it be that a wayward buzzard laid an egg on a fence post, and after days of incubating in the hot sun, out popped Grandpa?

The questions were never answered, but we begged Grandpa time and time again to tell his beguiling stories. Grandpa's stories were, well, stories, but Grandma's tale about his reunion with Uncle Tyler was the absolute truth. I know. I was there.

I can still hear Gram's soft voice...



Shawn Henley, Granddaughter

Your grandpa was born October 10, 1880, on a primitive tobacco farm in Palmyra, Tennessee. His lineage traces back to Ireland. In order to feed their ever-growing brood of thirteen children, his parents, Thomas and Claudell Henley, literally scraped the poor soil. Their sturdy Irish heritage saved the family from starvation.

Grandpa was a master woodsman—one with a deep love for the land and all wildlife. He never used dogs for hunting wild game—he didn't need them. Your grandpa knew critters' watering holes and their feeding habits. He could follow their trails better than any hound alive. Your grandpa lived with the game, not at it. He hunted for food, not sport. I can still hear your grandpa fume, "Killing something for sport is the silliest damn thing I've ever heard tell."

One crisp October day, your grandpa crouched behind a scrubby bush and aimed his shotgun at a squirrel. The gun misfired, and the bullet ricocheted off a tree. His brother Tyler fell to the ground. Your grandpa was only sixteen years old and didn't know how to cope with the possibility he'd killed his brother. With only a few pennies in his pocket, Grandpa hitched up his britches, shouldered his rifle, grabbed his Irish optimism, and started walking. His final destination was Omaha, Nebraska.

Fifty years later your grandpa returned to his roots. One spring afternoon, he walked, unannounced, into a tobacco barn in Clarksville, Tennessee. A man shaded his eyes, mopped the sweat from his brow, and jumped down from the tobacco bales. As he sauntered toward your grandpa, time stood still. The man offered his hand to your grandpa, and uttered a single word, "Walker."

Grandpa clasped his brother's hand and said, "Tyler." For a half-century, the brothers were strangers. But now in that musky tobacco barn, the layers of years were peeled away. Your grandpa never talked about it, but I knew he was relieved of a heavy, life-long burden.



A Family Reunion, 1927

from Gram's kitchen...



CHICKEN AND SPINACH

3 lbs. cooked chicken
2 pkgs. frozen spinach, cooked
For sauce, blend:
1 can mushrooms
1 1/2 cans cream chicken soup
3/4 c. mayonnaise
1/2 t. curry
2 T lemon juice

Layer spinach, then 3/4 sauce, chicken on top. Top with remaining sauce. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese. Bake 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Can serve over rice.

SPINACH & TORTELLINI SOUP

2 lbs. Italian sausage
32-oz. chicken broth
16-oz. whole tomatoes
1 pkg. spinach
8-oz. tortellini
1/2 c. chopped celery
2 c. water
1/2 c. onion, chopped
parmesan

Simmer celery, onion and sausage one hour in water. Add chicken broth, tomatoes and spinach and simmer another hour. Add tortellini and simmer another 1/2 hour.

down through the generations

POTATO SESAME BREAD

2 pkgs. yeast
5 1/2 c. sifted flour
2 T sugar
2 t. salt
1 1/3 c. milk
1/2 c. butter
1 1/2 c. sieved hot cooked potatoes
1 egg white, slightly beaten
Sesame seeds

In mixing bowl, thoroughly mix yeast, 2 c. flour, sugar & salt. Heat milk, butter & sieved potatoes over low heat until very warm (120-130 degrees). Butter need not be completely melted. Add liquid to dry ingredients. Beat 2 minutes. Add remaining flour, kneading in by hand (10 minutes) or with dough hook. Place dough in buttered bowl turning to butter all sides. Cover. Let rise until double in bulk. Punch down, divide into 4 parts. Roll each between buttered palms to form a strand about 15 inches long. Spiral wrap 2 forms together to form twist loaf. Place in buttered loaf pan. Let rise. Brush tops with egg white and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake at 375 degrees for 40 minutes. Makes two loaves.

KAREN'S SALAD

2 bags spinach
1 bag iceberg lettuce
1 c. cottage cheese
1 lb. bacon
3/4 c. Swiss cheese
1 red onion
3/4 lb. mushrooms
1 1/2 T poppy seeds
1 1/2 c. olive oil
3/4 c. vinegar
1 1/2 t. salt
3/4 c. sugar
3/4 t. dry mustard

Marinate last 8 ingredients overnight. Pour over first 5 ingredients just before serving. Crowd size.





Leola Mae Henley Beacham.
Gram.

1919-2007

MAY GRAM'S LIFE REACH OUT AND TOUCH TOMORROW

About This Culinary Memoir

This limited edition culinary memoir was coordinated and edited by Memoir Shoppe in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Book design, digital imaging and page layout was done by Shoebox Scanning & Design in Vero Beach, Florida.



Judith Kolva, Ph.D. is the founder and owner of Memoir Shoppe. Judith's doctoral work focused on how preserving life stories can create meaning in life. She is a trusted interviewer, expert researcher, and gifted writer whose experience and expertise makes completing life stories easy. Judith travels worldwide transforming precious memories into priceless memoirs. Please visit her web site:
www.memoirshoppe.com



cj Madigan is a publication designer and digital imaging specialist with over twenty years' experience in graphic design and print production. Her firm, Shoebox Scanning & Design in Vero Beach, Florida, helps private publishers turn manuscripts into masterpieces. You can reach her through her web site: www.shoeboxscanning.biz.

*S*tories have a way of taking care of us. They provide guidance, counsel, encouragement, inspiration. We learn from our stories. We build upon our stories. Actually, stories are the glue of human connections.

Fortunately, storytelling is embedded in the Henley DNA. Through Gram's stories, we learn about an ordinary woman with an extraordinary family story. We learn how the Henley Clan laughed, cried, played, and loved. We learn what it means to be a Henley.



The Henley Clan