

Remembering Jennie (Hughes) Rhodes
By Granddaughters Ginger and Cathy,
Great-Granddaughter Shellie,
And Son Robert
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I have to admit that I think of myself as the lucky one. I lived in Decatur until May of 1983, and was able to spend lots of time with Grandma. Thanksgivings, Christmas, Birthdays, and more, all included Grandma. Even the Christmas before she died, I was able to spend time with her. I will be forever grateful for whom she was, and the lessons that she taught me, even though I was not aware of those lessons at the time.

My first memories of Grandma are at the little apartment that she had on Eldorado. I remember the stairs that led up to her apartment and the neat kitchen with the "booth" that was her kitchen table. I don't remember anything else about the apartment. The stairs, the kitchen and Grandma...that's it.

I remember playing dominoes at that kitchen table. I didn't know how to play dominoes (actually, I still don't), but Grandma and I would make neat patterns with the dominoes, and stand them up on end only to watch them fall over. She kept me entertained for hours.

Grandma took me on my first city bus ride. How exciting and scary that was for me! We only went a few blocks, down to Elam's Root Beer Stand. We had root beer floats in the big glass frosted mugs, and then we actually walked back to her apartment.

Grandma was the only "babysitter" I ever had. I never stayed with anyone but her.

I remember when she told us that she was marrying Ben Trimby. Mom was not really thrilled about that, but Grandma was determined that she wanted to marry Ben, and no one was going to change her mind.

After Ben died, Grandma moved into a first floor apartment on South Water St. There was a big front porch, and a nice big bay window. She loved violets, and I remember her growing violets in pots in that apartment.

After I graduated from high school, I worked in a clothing store in downtown Decatur. Grandma used to walk from her apartment to the store, to sit and visit with us. Everyone in the store knew who she was, of course, and even some of our customers knew her. She would sit by the front window, and enjoy watching us. Grandma was always a special occasion at the store. Sometimes she would

ask me to walk with her to the bank, or up to Osco Drug Store, to pick up a few things. Wherever we went, and whoever we saw, she always made sure that they knew that I was her granddaughter.

Even when she moved to the Anna B. Millikin Home, she continued to walk downtown to visit me. By that time, she'd walk to the store, and when she was ready to leave, we'd call a taxi to take her home. The one way walk was enough for her.

I remember how adamant she was that she was going to take care of herself. She did not want any of her children to have to take care of her. She was so proud of her position at the Millikin Home, taking care of the old ladies, paying her own way. She got a discount on her room because of her responsibilities there. When Grandma had her mind set, she was very strong willed. There was no changing her mind.

But she was also so very sweet and very kind. She was so proud of her children and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She never tired of talking about how proud she was of all of us. And everyone loved Grandma.

I remember Grandma's extreme gentle side. She was always very soft-spoken. She had a beautiful smile.

I remember how fascinated she was with the space program in the 60's. She was fascinated with the moon landing. She thought that was just amazing, that we could send a man to the moon. I bought her a commemorative plate of the moon landing, and she kept that displayed wherever she lived.

I believe that it's because of Grandma, that I've developed a rather strong will. I believe I inherited from her the willingness and ability to do what it takes to get through the rough times. She was a very big influence on me. And, I didn't appreciate all that she was, all that she went through, and all that she taught me, until I was much older.

I have many more wonderful memories of Grandma - but wanted to share these few with all of you. I feel very lucky to have had Grandma in my life.

Ginger

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I too consider you the lucky one for being able to spend so much time with Grandma.

I can say that my first real memories of her were also spending the night with her in her little apartment on Eldorado. What you described of her apartment is what I remember, along with the bedroom...or alcove, I should say. I think the little bedroom was off to the left of the front door and it was just barely big enough for the bed, and maybe a chest. I also remember the dominoes...and did she have Chinese checkers too? I'm not sure about that. The other thing I remember about spending the night on Saturday night was that she liked to listen to Lawrence Welk.

I can still see her trudging up those outside stairs to her 2nd floor apartment with groceries in her arms (those outside stairs are a lasting impression for me). She was obviously very physically strong as well as being mentally and emotionally strong. But she was a very gentle, loving, caring person. She knew how and when to take care of people. She could laugh at funny stories, and she could make you feel good with just a smile.

She always tried to give gifts to us grandkids when she could for special occasions. I still have a little white Bible she gave me on my 9th birthday. That was a few months before we moved, so that's always been a special gift for me.

Now, of course, I wish I had made the effort to visit or write to her more often in order to get to know her better; but, I know her well enough to say that I'm very proud to be her granddaughter.

Cathy

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Well, even I have a few little memories of Grandma. I have one special one that I've shared with you guys before, I think. She was a pretty old lady by then, but she came down to spend a week or two with us in Chattanooga when I was in high school and living with Mamaw and Papaw. She happened to be there when the "wedding of the century" happened, and Prince Charles married Lady Diana. She was very excited about the wedding, bubbly almost. She and I talked about it in the days preceding, and it really bridged the generation gap. I was equally excited about all the pomp and circumstance at that time because, well, I was 16 (I think) and still picturing myself finding my prince. Little did I know that both Lady Di and I would have a rough road with that one. Anyway, she set her alarm for what had to be about 4:00 a.m. and got up that morning to watch the wedding in real time. I, being a sullen, lazy teen, did not. However, she and I watched the endless reruns together all day long, as well as all the fashion commentaries, etc. These are the strongest memories that this great-granddaughter has of Jennie. :-) They are meaningful to me

though, and represent some quality bonding time that I had with her. As you all may recall, me bonding with any adult at that time was almost non-existent. All most adults saw of me at that time was a closed, locked door. Grandma Rhodes breached the barrier.....

Shellie

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One time I drove Grandma back to Decatur from Chattanooga, it was probably somewhere around 1980, she was still working as a helper at the Anna B Millikin Home. When we got to her rooms, I thought she would want to rest after the long trip...but, no, she immediately shed her shoes, put on her slippers, took me by the hand, and we took off down the hall at top speed to find her friends so she could introduce me to them, and tell them she was home, of course. But, that was Grandma, making me feel special...and, I can tell you, making me very proud that my 88 year old Grandma was so spry...:)

Cathy

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I think it's incredible how the three of you have captured so accurately, the spirit and character of my Mom, your grandma. I loved my Dad and enjoyed the many stories he told me about his boyhood and teen years, but my Mom was my mentor; the one I went to about any problem I had and I loved her for that as well as her sweet personality..

There are several adjectives that I can think of to describe my Mom. Among them are: she was kind, caring, compassionate, competent, sympathetic, intelligent, pleasant, faithful to her religion, humble and independent.

She loved visiting with friends and neighbors as well as family get-togethers, and always had a kind word for everyone. Although she had strong opinions about how things should be, she never tried to force her ideas on others. Rather she always thought others were smarter than she was, even though the opposite was true.

She was compassionate in that when she saw a problem, she was the first to jump in and fix it. She was very capable in knowing what to do and having the knowledge and strength to fix problems. Mom had great sympathy for anyone who had problems and she loved caring for people.

She was intelligent and understood the world about her, far beyond her formal education. I think she knew her capabilities, but would never put herself above others

Mom had a firm faith in God and in the Christian way of life, but she rarely would take part in church activities, simply because she didn't want to be in the limelight.

She was a very independent person; not in a confrontational way, but she depended primarily on her own capabilities.

But she dearly loved her "papa", Joe Hughes, and thought he could do anything. He was, actually, a very capable person in many fields and was not afraid to try anything that he thought was worthwhile, so Jennie did depend on him to guide her along. And he depended on her also to help him during her teen years on the farm.

Since I was her first child and a male of the species, after I became a teenager she depended on me a lot too. She always told me that I was just like "papa" and could do anything she asked of me. I always tried to please her by trying to help her, but since I hadn't yet developed all of the capabilities that she credited to me, there were some times when I let her down and I always regretted that, but when I failed, she always jumped in and fixed things herself.

Jennie Belle (Hughes) Rhodes was a great lady and I'm sure she now lives in a large mansion in heaven that she built during the 92 years she was on earth. It was a great privilege for me to be her son, and I very much appreciate the fact that Mom's grand-daughters and her great grand daughter have seen the greatness of her character.

Robert