

A Grandchild's Tribute to Gran
(Written by grandsons)
(Given at the Funeral of Pearl Averett Hall)

I don't know why we grandchildren called her Gran. There is no such word in Webster's dictionary. But it wouldn't have been right to call her Grandmother or Grandma—she was too special to be categorized with all other grandmothers. No, she had to be called Gran.

The word "Gran," to those who used it, is a pretty all-encompassing word. Some people can be described with one or two objectives. When you call some people good or kind or vital you feel satisfied that you've pretty well summed up their personalities. Not so with Gran. Any of these adjectives or all the conventional ones put together leave Gran's essence undescribed. We grandchildren don't have to try to find words to describe her; the word "gran" plucks the same strings in all of us. But for the benefit of those who could not call her Gran, I'd like to tell you a few things about her.

The casual observer might think Gran was not a very religious person. She was religious, in the highest and most noble sense of the word. It is true that she would not parade her religion—affection and showiness in religion offended her. But her grandsons who served missions can testify that a letter from Gran, with only an, "I'm proud of you," provided far more inspiration than an eloquent religious sermon by persons reputedly more pious. No one who ever watched and listened to Gran tell of her romance with Dad could approach courtship quite the same way. None of her grandchildren came away from those stories without a new and higher notion of the loveliness of virtuous courtship and marriage.

An athlete who cannot adequately express his estimation of another athlete will call him an athlete's athlete. Well, not quite analogously, Gran's sons-in-law would call her a son-in-law's mother-in-law. The outsider would also have difficulty understanding why her sons-in-law liked her so much; after all, it seemed their wives spent almost as much time with Gran as with them. But the outsider did not know Gran. All the sons-in-law knew that she would prefer losing her daughters to creating the slightest problem between her daughters and her "wonderful sons-in-law," as she would call them behind their backs. To their faces, of course she would stoutly maintain, with a twinkle in her eyes, that if there was anything wrong with her daughters, it was their husband's fault, not hers. That before her daughters had gotten married they were free from fault. Anyway, Gran's one horror was that she might intrude in the lives of her family. The more she tried not to intrude, the more the sons-in-law encourage their wives to be sure her needs were taken care of. And so it was that sons-in-law become sons-in-love.

Gran was, above all, a lady. But she was not a contrived lady. Modesty, graciousness, humor, and cleanliness were as natural to her as the color of her eyes. And Gran was positive proof that a lady can be fun.

We grandchildren have so many wonderful memories of Gran—Of her glowing with pride at her grandchildren and then great-grandchildren performing at the Thanksgiving and Christmas parties, and of her laughing so spontaneously and contagiously, and of so many other Gran-like things.

Well, I hoped to give you an inkling of what the word “Gran” means to those who used it. But I’ve failed. It’s kind of like trying to explain love. You try and try but finally have to admit that if your listener hasn’t felt it, he can’t understand it. Love is love; Gran is Gran.

In a way, Gran’s people will miss her terribly; but in another way, they can’t. How can you miss someone who is so much a part of you?

Well, I’ll quit trying now. I just hope that all people will develop the Gran within themselves.