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[Definition]

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Grandma's Integrity

Since I was a young boy, I looked up to my grandmother. She was the nicest, most caring person I have ever known. Born in 1917, my grandmother undoubtedly experienced many incidents and events that many people may take for granted, such as the Great Depression and both World Wars. She made her profession as a real estate agent, being one of the first female real estate agents in the United States, undeniably facing trials and tribulations along the way. She was an active member in her church and community in Monroe, Michigan, belonging to several clubs and organizations. As a mother of four, she made it a priority to teach her children the importance of family, and I can attest to the fact that all of her children, which include my father, have not only taken on this importance of family but have instilled it in their own children and grandchildren.

Unfortunately, on September 1, 2008, my elderly grandmother passed away. At her viewing, many family members were gathered in groups, reminiscing about all the good times we shared with her. I found myself in a circle of family members in which my Uncle Gary was speaking. He and my father had been talking about the fun times they shared at my grandmother's cottage, and I smiled because it occurred to me they had passed this on to their children, who also share fond memories. Uncle Gary then looked around the circle and told us very sincerely that even though my grandmother had done many great things in her life, she approached every opportunity with a profound sense of

integrity. Upon researching the word, integrity, I found there are several definitions. However, I believe the one which truly describes my grandmother stated integrity involved “soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue, esp. in relation to truth and fair dealing; uprightness, honesty, sincerity” (qtd. in OED).

The word integrity comes from the Latin word *integritas*, which means “entireness or completeness,” and was first used circa 1450 in *Mirour Saluacioun* in which it is stated, “When he [Christ] was borne savyng his moders integritee” (qtd. in OED). In this use of the word, integrity most closely means unimpaired condition, which would accurately describe the fact Christ was born of a virgin mother. However, when I read this definition, I was not quite sure it fully encompassed the meaning my uncle intended to portray about my grandmother.

Furthering my research on integrity, I found 1548 was the first year in which the word was used with a meaning for which I had been searching. Writing with regard to King Henry VI, the author, Hall, says Henry was “So much esteemed...for his liberalitie, clemencie, integritie, and corage” (qtd. in OED). The Oxford English Dictionary quotes another author, S. Du Verger, who writes, “Who for a kingdome would not have blemished her integrity.” I truly believe this adequately describes my grandmother’s integrity to the fullest. From the stories I have been told, I gather that she would never, under any circumstance, trade her moral principles for earthly gain. At the time of my grandmother’s funeral, various couples were speaking with my family members about my grandmother selling them their first homes. In fact, I heard of one couple to whom she had sold nine houses! I believe that is a true testament to the fact that my grandmother was one of the most upright and honest people.

Integrity is a virtue that is often set aside, especially in the business world, where men and women alike strive to succeed by immoral means in order to further their careers or to simply make money. This is not to say all businessmen are dishonest in their work, but I feel that more men and women should strive for excellence in the way my grandmother did on a regular basis, with integrity foremost in all of her dealings and relationships. I, too, admit to letting greed separate me from my principles at times, but I will endeavor to take every moment as an opportunity to show the integrity my grandmother bestowed on all of her children, who now teach the same moral uprightness to their own children.

Works Cited

"integrity, *n.*" The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. George A. Smathers Library, U of Florida Lib., 16 September 2008 <<http://dictionary.oed.com>>.