

The Secret To A Long Life

It's a treasure more valuable than gold," the young girl said. "I wouldn't trade it for nothing"

They had gathered for a family celebration they said. Oh, not a birthday, anniversary or birth. They were celebrating death. That's right. A celebration of dying.

I know for some of you it might sound odd. Death is sad and mournful. There is no happiness or joy in losing someone you love you would say. But for some death is joy filled. It's crossing over to a better place. It's a spiritual completion and a holy event. For Amy it meant getting the best gift ever.

Amy was very close to her Grandmother. They visited often and shared some of the

most memorable moments. When she was very small, they played together, walked together and when Amy was sick Grandma would stay with her so Mom and Dad could go to work. So they loved each other in all situations and prayed together to resolve their deepest concerns. Like the time Amy fell while she was carrying her Mom's best vase. Without hesitation Amy turned to Grandma and said, "It's prayer time. This one's a big one Grandma." I believe that Amy thought that her Grandma had as much to do with healing and fixing things as God did. Maybe even more. That's how much Amy trusted her Grandma. Their love could withstand anything life could throw their way.

But it was inevitable. There would certainly come a time when reality and old age would

gain the upper hand. This time Grandma couldn't kiss it and make it better. Grandma couldn't pray this one away. You see, Grandma was dying. It was her time and what a splendid time it was.

It was Spring and the flowers that she and Amy attended to each year were in full bloom. You might think that this is the perfect time to be alive. But Grandma convinced Amy otherwise. At 91, she had lived a full life. She had no regrets. Except perhaps leaving Amy alone. But she had taken care of that, too. "Amy," she whispered quietly. "In my closet at home there is a small wooden box. It has your name on it. In it is all that I can give you. All that I hold dear. In that box is the secret to living a long life."

No, she didn't leave a fortune behind. She had no diamonds or pearls to pass on. What she left was her secret to life. In her final day she called Amy by her side. They reflected back on a life time of love, happiness and commitment. They laughed and cried and before saying goodbye, Grandma pulled her close, kissed her on the forehead and gently fell into a deep and final sleep. A sleep that would take her home to the grandest celebration of all.

Weeks after her passing Amy retrieved the box from Grandma's closet. She took it out to the kitchen table where they shared many happy moments together. Placing the old wooden box on the table, she carefully opened it. There inside Amy found an envelope with the words "My secret to a long life." Her heart raced with the thought

that Grandma had gone through all this trouble just for her. She held the note close to her chest and said out loud, “I love you Grandma, thanks!”

Inside the envelope was one index card. On it were written four words...”Love until you die!”

Amy roared with laughter. She ran out of the house and down the street to where her Mom was. There the two of them sat and laughed until it hurt.

Some where in that laughter Amy and her Mom decided to hold a special celebration every year. The big day was the day Grandma died. Everyone who knew and loved Grandma would come home for the big event no matter where life had taken

them.

There is a profound truth in those simple words for I have found many who have long ago died in spirit and hope yet continue to breathe. For Amy and her family it's not a secret anymore. It's a celebration.

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