



Bernice Wells

This Life Matters

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound...."

Bernice Wells was born on May, 25, 1904 In Potsdam, NY. Today at 103 years she speaks in soft whispers. Her mind is sharp and quick. She is amazingly present to those around her.

Bernice has beautifully coiffured white hair. The day I visited with her, she was wearing a burnt orange outfit, nylon stockings with new silver slippers that she had received for her 103rd Birthday. Home has been in the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing Home since September 3, 2004. Although she has cardiac disease, her emotional heart is full and continually generous.

Bernice has two daughters, Justine Freebern from North River and Janice Meade from Pottersville, NY. Bernice has a friend, a hospice volunteer, who plays scrabble with her on Wednesdays.

Bernice's earliest memories involve a scar that she still bears from falling while pushing a doll carriage. There were four girls and two boys in her family. Since she was second to the oldest she had responsibility for the other children.

Her father was a dairy farmer and during her younger years they moved to Nicholville. Two of her sisters had milking chores but that wasn't for Bernice. She doesn't even like milk. Well, except for a little on her cereal occasionally. They had barn cats to keep down the mice but we won't talk about mice. Then there was Pal the family dog. He didn't walk her to school but was a welcome sight when she came home. Bernice had the indoor chores: Washing the dishes, dusting and making the beds.

Bernice went to a one-room country school house. When it came time for high school she had to travel to St. Regis Falls High School. Bernice "liked school" until "she got the urge to make money." Mrs. Adams was her favorite Sunday School teacher at the Methodist Church. Mrs. Adams made the time go quickly by giving her class craft projects to keep their hands busy while she told the stories of the Bible. Amazing Grace. When she moved back to Pottersville she became a Baptist.

When the urge to make money became too strong she applied to the famous Lake Placid Club as a waitress. She had a white uniform with a starched apron. They had high standards at the "Club". There was no pencil or paper to keep track of orders. She had to remember all the orders in her head and get the right food to the right person. The patrons of the Lake Placid Club were the rich and famous. Bernice remembers meeting with the owner of Waterman's Fountain Pens. It was a good place to work and Bernice made many girl friends. It was also where she met Harold Wells. He was the blond haired man who supervised the men's group at the Club.



Bernice and Harold were married in Brushton, NY. Her sister and brother-in-law witnessed this important day. They spent the night in Malone. The weather that day was so pleasant. The next day it started raining and Harold bought a light green rain coat for his new bride. That day they drove to Montreal, Canada in their Oldsmobile. It was to be a week's vacation. A rare treat to begin their married life. The rain in Montreal



brought a sore throat and cold to Harold. The Wells decided to cut their week in Montreal short and return to North Creek to spend the rest of the week with Harold's parents. The cold and the imposing city were no match for familiarity and family.

The Wells moved to Pottersville and later to Hudson Falls where Bernice started working at the Carlton Hotel as a waitress. She liked the work. The Carlton allowed their waitresses to use a pad and pen to keep orders straight. They also mailed and shipped maple sugar products. Bernice picked and sold raspberries as well.

Vacations were not a regular occurrence for the Wells Family. There were some summers that allowed for a time of camping. The high points of family life were steady love, regular meals together and holidays. Christmas is Bernice's favorite holiday. For many years they cut their own tree but then for safety sake an artificial tree adorned their home.

Her life has spanned 18 Presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to George W. Bush. Her favorite was President Dwight D. Eisenhower because he was a "nice" gentleman.



Days for Bernice begin and end at seven. There is comfort in the regularity of her days. Each day begins with the same breakfast: Scrambled eggs, toast, applesauce and sometimes bacon or sausage. Prior to 2004 she lived by herself and cooked the identical breakfast. She doesn't care about some of the foods that previously were important except for breakfast. Her favorite songs are "Amazing Grace" and "The Old Rugged Cross". Bernice begins each day with her devotional.

The hands that, late in life, show arthritis have produced handmade tied quilts and beautiful crocheted and embroidered articles.

Her delight is in her family. Every corner and on each shelf in Bernice's room at the Adirondack Tri-County Nursing Home proudly introduces her two children, 7 grandchildren, 11 great grandchildren and now 1 great great grandchild. Amazing Grace. What is Bernice proud of: A plain and normal life: nothing fancy.

"Normal day, let me be aware of the treasure you are. Let me learn from you, love you, bless you before you depart. Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow."

Mary Jean Iron

She is dreaming much more now. At 103 years of life these dreams are not frightening. There is nothing scary. Harold is appearing more in those dreams. Amazing Grace.



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Jan F. Demers
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