

But a Short Time to Live

By **Leslie Coulson**

OUR little hour,—how swift it flies
When poppies flare and lilies smile;
How soon the fleeting minute dies,
Leaving us but a little while
To dream our dream, to sing our song,
To pick the fruit, to pluck the flower,
The Gods—They do not give us long,—
One little hour.

Our little hour,—how short it is
When Love with dew-eyed loveliness
Raises her lips for ours to kiss
And dies within our first caress.
Youth flickers out like wind-blown flame,
Sweets of to-day to-morrow sour,
For Time and Death, relentless, claim
Our little hour.

Our little hour,—how short a time
To wage our wars, to fan our hates,
To take our fill of armoured crime,
To troop our banners, storm the gates.

Blood on the sword, our eyes blood-red,
Blind in our puny reign of power,
Do we forget how soon is sped
Our little hour?

Our little hour,—how soon it dies:
How short a time to tell our beads,
To chant our feeble Litanies,
To think sweet thoughts, to do good
deeds.
The altar lights grow pale and dim,
The bells hang silent in the tower—
So passes with the dying hymn
Our little hour.

Good Morning. My name is Adrian West. I am a friend of the family and I am honored to be here to remember, with you, my dear friend, Ms. Clydie Cates.

Over the past several weeks as Clydie and the family got the news of her cancer, she invited me to reminisce with her and talk about some of the things she thought were important memories of her life.

Many of you knew Clydie as “The Flower Girl” a name first given to her by an article in the Roxboro Courier=Times. Be it vegetables or flowers, Clydie loved to garden. She didn’t care much for indoor plants, because she said that gardening indoors “closes you up.” Clydie said that digging in the dirt was, for her, good therapy. It helped her to get rid of all of her anxieties. And she had her share of anxieties to purge. A close friend, John Clayton, once remarked, “That’s the DIGGIN’est woman I’ve seen in my life. There CAN’T be anything wrong with her.” Just wanted you to know, Mr. Clayton, she has missed her friendship with Bernette so very much, but you can be sure they’re together again, today.

Clydie’s flowers were famous in Roxboro, but if Clydie was known for any of her flowers, it was surely her poppies, especially the peach colored ones. Eventually she got red, light blue, and

other colors (like purple and lavender) that nobody else had. Even though she tried hard to guard her poppy seeds, today, Clydie's poppies are, likely, all over Person County. Even strangers came by to ask for her flowers. Some traded for them, and she suspects, some even stole them. NOTE TO TED: "It's probably OK now, if you go ahead and tear down that building behind the house, but if you find any poppy seeds, you must not keep them all. Most of them have already been promised. BTW, just so you know, I know you already have some of my poppy seeds. I guess that's OK, too. But, you still should have asked."

Clydie was no stranger to pain. She suffered physical pain for most of her life, dating back to the early 60s when she suffered a bone tumor. But, she was stoic about her cancer, which she knew would likely end her life. In conversations with Reverend Brown...and me...she said she wasn't afraid of dying. She was ready. In fact, when she heard the news from the doctors in the hospital, she decided that God had need for her for a special job. In her prayers during those first days, her questions for God were not requests about why she was dying or when. Instead, she was curious to know what job her Lord had in mind for her. She asked him to reveal it, but apparently he had plans to surprise her.

Over the past few weeks of reminiscing, I have learned a few things about Clydie, which may surprise you.

Most important accomplishments:

- Accepting the Lord as her one true savior. She did this at 13 in an alter call with her sister, Beatrice (then 14).
- Raising her three children and seeing them educated.

Things for which she would most like to be remembered:

- Clydie had great compassion and love for people.
- She was a giving and sharing person
- She did some in-home care for people and was much loved by some of the families she served. She seldom "took a breath," following the death of one of her charges...she just went right on to the next one.

Things that made her most proud:

Clydie was very proud of the education and success of her children. They all went to college and made their own, independent way.

- Teresa's talent as a singer and stage performer were always a great source of pride going all the way back to her lead role in her high school production of Anything Goes.
- Teresa's high school participation in North Carolina Governor's School.
- Teresa's teaching and volunteering at Trinity Academy of Raleigh.
- Ronnie's intelligence and good grades.
- Ronnie's success as a business man.
- Ronnie's natural ability as a wonderful father pleased her immensely. It also puzzled her, because he couldn't stand little kids when he was younger and seemed to have no

patience for other children, which he often saw as little more than a whiny nuisance. In fact, some of Teresa's pj party shenanigans got on his "last nerve," which was something Teresa enjoyed.

- Dale's singing talent. She was enormously proud of his summer jobs at Busch Gardens, his leading parts in music reviews, his job as an entertainer on a river boat in Nashville, and his job as an entertainer and exercise leader on a Hawaiian cruise ship.
- Dale's Masters Degree and especially his recent nomination as Teacher of the Year.
- Joe's success as a business man. She is especially proud that he prevailed against the wrong that was done him in the lawsuit when he and Dale moved to Atlanta.

Events that stick out in Clydie's memory:

- Her neck surgery (to rebuild 3 disks) in '77. Her neck was never the same after that and interfered with a lot of her plans for her own life.
- Eddie Wayne's life was destroyed in Viet Nam, especially after he learned that his father was dying.
- Lynne got so close to her after she got sick, even taking Teresa's place helping her at the Bryan Center when Teresa had to go down to Furman to tend to Josie during her illness.

Some of her most joyful moments:

- When Teresa was born healthy.
- Seeing Teresa's involvement in church.
- When Ronnie decided to bring his children into the church.
- Teresa and Ronnie's weddings.

Some of her most embarrassing memories:

- Once, when she took Ronnie to the store as a child, he asked her for candy, and when she said no, he snuck some in his pocket anyway. She had seen him do this, but didn't say anything until they got to the register. Then, she told the clerk to ask Ronnie if he had anything in his pockets.
- Clydie was very embarrassed by her divorce from James, because she had grown up believing that if she ever got married, she could make it last. She saw her divorce as a personal failure.

Some of her most touching memories:

- Dale recently asked her to promise that when she gets to heaven, she'll punch him once in a while, just to remind him that she is near.
- Teresa remarked that when Mama gets to heaven she will be overwhelmed with the beauty, which will be unlike any she has seen on earth.

Pieces of advice that she has for her family:

- Hold, touch, and love your friends, family, and loved ones. She would especially like to offer this advice to her remaining siblings, Ruth, Cathy, and William. Open your homes and your hearts to the people in your life, especially each other and your mother.

- Chris, please learn to accept the well meant advice of the people who care about you.
- As a final gesture, Clydie would like to offer her love to her own mother.
- When a couple gets married, they should balance their time with both families.
- Leanna, please be careful, especially now, to be mindful of everything you put into your body.
- For the entire family, please give Chris and Leanna all of your best support. As newlyweds in a complicated and hostile world, they will need your help to grow and strengthen their marriage and make it last for always.

What it means to love someone:

- Clydie thinks it is important to show love. It can be done with a personal gift, which can be something simple...a flower or card, with no need for special occasion.
- Hugs should be given generously and spontaneously.
- Mothers should especially show love to their children. This is very important, because people need love as much as nourishment and they will find it wherever they can, sometimes inappropriately (for example, gangs, cults, affairs, etc.).
- Love should be cherished. The best love starts with friendship and respect.

Things she would change about herself:

- Clydie would have liked to have been closer to her grandchildren. If she could go back in time, she would spend "bunches of time" with all five.
- In the past, she got involved with a man that her children didn't like. She sees that that was wrong.
- She would make stronger efforts, in spite of her back problems and other health issues, to further her education and make a better life for herself.

Things that should have gotten said:

- A special goodbye to Ruth Lane. I have special memories of playing with you as a child (picking out your clothes, taking you and Eddie Wayne on dates with her when she and James were dating). I felt good about the recognition I got for having taken care of you and our father when he was dying. It is especially hard to leave you.
- Dianne, I love you. You have always been very special to me. I'm going on to meet Eddie Wayne, and we'll be expecting you some day. We'll be waiting for that day. Meanwhile, this life is for you. It's time to let Eddie Wayne go.
- William, I appreciate all of your short visits...coming by with a bowl of soup or a case of Pepsi during on of your work breaks. The little things really are important.

Things that made her sad:

- That Joe Henderson doesn't have a better relationship with his parents. They are missing out on the life and memories of an especially wonderful man.

Things that make her glad:

- Good news and the love of the Lord.

- When Teresa and Ronnie (and now Chris and Leanna) were expecting their babies.
- When Teresa told her she had bonded with her new daughter-in-law.

Congregational Rememberings

“The Summer Day”, by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?