

**Granny Mable Dickerson Arnold**

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Mabel Dickerson Arnold was my maternal grandmother. She was a tiny wisp of a woman who dipped snuff, would cuss when provoked and laughed uproariously when she passed gas. There is a quote by Alan Devoe in regard to cats that fits Granny to a tea: “If she is comical, it is only because of the incongruence of so demure a look and so wild at heart.”

Granny dressed in colorful cotton shirtwaist dresses with fabric covered belts and with hosiery, except in the summertime. She had costume jewelry to match every outfit, complete with beads and ear screws that actually screwed into the ear. I still have some of her necklaces. Granny always carried a handkerchief which smelled faintly of Jergen’s hand lotion, a cherry almond fragrance. Each time I smell Jergen’s, I feel as warm and safe as I did when Granny and Mother were nearby. I believe there is a connection between certain aromas and memory; our minds, bodies, and spirits really are quite magical.

Granny had a figure well into her eighties. Everything looked like it needed a good pressing, however. She walked to town with a parasol until she was in her seventies, not an umbrella mind you, but a fancy dress parasol. Granny loved gloves—dress, every day, and everything in between. Her favorite were a pair of long, white fingertip gloves which came up well passed the elbow. My favorite were a pair of black, wrist-length gloves decorated with rhinestones and sequins. She had a plain, black pair that I loved pretending were riding gloves. She had very small hands just like mine.

Granny was one of my first playmates. She taught me to play dominos and checkers and to pop popcorn in a cast iron skillet, which still my favorite. Today, I am a fan of Orville Redenbacher with movie theater butter. Every weekend, I enjoy popcorn. Again, through memory, our minds, bodies, and spirits are quite remarkable.

Daddy said Granny “Wouldn’t weight a hundred pounds soaking wet. It’s not the size of the dog in the fight; it’s the size of the fight in the dog. Mabel doesn’t realize she’s not big enough ‘in the poot’ to do it. That’s Granny; she was a scrappy little cuss.” I translated that that to mean that she was resourceful and funny.

Granny could remember her mother, Josephina Schultz, telling about coming over mountains in a covered wagon as a child from Tennessee to come to Arkansas with their family piano in the wagon with them. She loved music and taught her children and grands to love it too. She was descended from hearty Scotch-Irish stock with a smattering of German and Indian thrown in for good measure.

Granny was a self-taught midwife, just like her mother, Josephina. Mother said, “Granny had helped to deliver numerous children in the community while waiting for the doctor to get there.” The rest of the legend tells that she was also called on when someone died to prepare the body for embalming and burial. I can remember as a very small child Granny and Mother being called away when a neighbor in the community was sick or had died. Granny Clampett, the country healer, was alive and well in my family of origin.

The antique bedstead that I use was first Great Grandmother Josephina’s, then Granny’s, then Mother’s, and now mine. They each started housekeeping with it. I inherited it at my

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mother's death in 1978. Even when I went to Valdosta, Georgia to teach from 1996 to 1999, the bedstead stayed home at the farmhouse to await my return.

Granny taught, "The four bedposts that I lay upon are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." The sacred feminine version in my family would be Josephina, Mabel, Hazel and Muggin, the archetype of the wounded healer and the women in my family.

Granny was born in 1888 and died at the age of 88. I learned the Jungian term synchronicity early via Granny. As I write this story in honor and memory of Granny, I am just taken with how much like her I am. When we would walk to town on Saturdays with that parasol, beads, ear screws and gloves, many of Granny's contemporaries would comment on how much I favored Granny. I do not know if it was true or not. However, it sure pleased Granny, who could not wait to tell Mother and Daddy what "so and so" had said. What a gift. Even though she has been gone many years, they remain alive and well through us and whenever we choose to visit the memory.

With five of six living children, Granny rode the circuit between and among her offspring and grandchildren. Aunt Clara and Uncle Olie (pronounced o' Lee) lived in Houston, Aunt Christene lived in Camden, Mother lived in Prescott, and Aunt Jeanette and Goheen lived in Little Rock. So for weeks and months at a time, she visited each in turn for tolerable periods. I say tolerable because both Granny's and the visited offspring's nerves were tested.

I have a postcard dated 1962 from Granny to Mother telling about her visit to Little Rock. It is a real treasure now. As Granny aged and her health began to fail, she lived with one child or another. She lived with us from about 1964–1968 when I was eight to twelve years old.

Mother's siblings, oldest to youngest, were: Aunt Josie; Aunt Clara, Mother (Hazel Marie), Christene, Aunt Jeanette, and Uncle Loyd. Aunt Josie married Alton Goheen and had two children, Doris and Sandy. They lived in Little Rock. I can remember Mother and me visiting Aunt Joe in the hospital. Just before her death, she had to have a leg amputated, diabetes possibly.

I can remember Mother lifting the hospital bed covers to inspect Aunt Josie's leg. It had been removed above the knee. She had lifted the bedcovers before I knew what she was "fixing to do." I am level with the side of the bed and afraid to look at the remaining limb. I just knew a bloody stump (just like Augustus McCray's in Lonesome Dove) was going to be eye level with me. The remaining limb was bandaged. The memory is still quite vivid. Early visual trauma has a way of staying with you.

As I reflect upon this incident from my childhood, I just realized why I was afraid of crutches and folks with casts as a child. When people would come in the store on crutches and in casts, Mother always said that I would run away crying. It is at this moment that I made the connection. Our minds, bodies, and spirits really do serve to protect us until we are able to accept and make use of the messages they hold.

Aunt Joe wore lots of makeup, skillfully applied and well blended. She also wore Ray Ban Sunglasses and great clothes, like culottes, Capri pants and tailored shorts with a dress and a belted cover-up that you could leave unbuttoned from the waist down to show off your legs. Aunt Joe always smelled of Estee Lauder Youth Dew Perfume. Each time, I smell it, I remember how pretty and vibrant she was. Our minds, bodies, and spirits help to keep their memories alive.

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I recall that Aunt Joe was the pretty one. Aunt Clara was raising babies. Aunt Christene was divorced and raising her two children alone. She had a good job at the Bag Pack in Clarendon near Camden, made good money, and owned her own home. Mother was the successful store owner, married to the handsome bad boy, and had a child in middle age. Aunt Jeanette was the young widow with two young children that married the infamous Goheen, probably for financial reasons. Uncle Loyd was retired military a ladies' man, and my favorite. The Dickerson Arnold Clan bears a faint resemblance to the European, collectively, and Scotch-Irish, specifically. It was a traditional family with a vague resemblance to the comedies and dramas of the 50s and 60s with popular movies and soap operas thrown in for spice.

Granny's brother, Cyrus Dickerson, was Mr. Sam Dickerson's father. My understanding is that Cousin Sam (twice removed) wrote for the *Old Time Chronicle* for many years and was a college professor as well. The Dickerson family line and traditions live on through this publication.

Granny did not own her home. She first lived in Townhouse Apartments on Main Street. She lived in the ground-floor apartment on your right as you entered the apartment building via the sidewalk out front.

You could enter by going through the front door of the apartment building and into the hallway/stair area, and then through the front door of her apartment. This reminds me of the Lucy and Desi set, of television fame. Or, you could park in the driveway and enter through the kitchen via the side door, much like Fred and Ethel did upon entering the Ricardo apartment.

I liked the kitchen entrance best—it felt more like home, the smell of Granny's cooking and hot coffee greeted you upon arrival. Granny was always cooking something grand that she and I had "collected the ingredient for" in the days before. She cooked things like homemade blackberry cobbler with dumplings in the filling or homemade Divinity from the pecans that we had picked up from that huge pecan tree beside Mr. Mack's shop. Mother's favorite was blackberry cobbler. Granny's favorite was Dewberry, more difficult to find, but well worth the effort.

There was always a pot of coffee made and ready to share with whoever would drop by that day. She loved coffee and drank it throughout the day. She even drank iced coffee in the afternoons, long before we had Starbuck's cappuccinos, espressos, and lattes.

One of my favorite Granny memories (circa 1966–68) is drinking coffee with her in the summertime. The cups were those thick, heavy, dark brown stoneware mugs; smaller at the bottom, getting bigger toward the top. Granny would put about a quarter of a cup of coffee in the bottom of my cup and fill the rest with milk. I thought and felt so grown up. Through the gift of memory, I can still see Granny sitting at her kitchen table at the townhouse flat and drinking coffee with me.

There we were in Prescott, Arkansas drinking lattes uptown, long before Starbuck's and Books a Million made it fashionable. We may not have known what to call it back then, but I remember that it was fun. I am sure that in my active imagination, I was Audrey Hepburn or Doris Day in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* or *That Touch of Mink*, respectively.

Anytime, we sat at the kitchen table over coffee, Granny always got this far away, misty look in her eyes would talk about drinking coffee with Grandpa Jim. He died just before my birth in 1956. She would retell the story about how he always poured a little bit of the hot

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coffee into his saucer and would imitate the slurping sounds that he always made for me. Through her smiles and laughter, as she told the story, I knew then that Grandpa Jim was the great love and, therefore, the great loss of Granny's life which would only be rectified in the life to come. I missed him right along with her though I had never met him. I learned to love him through Granny. What a gift and treasure she was. She was committed to my knowing and keeping the memory of their love and my Grandpa Jim alive. I hope I did her proud. I knew, even as a child, that Granny Mabel and Grandpa Jim Arnold had a great love, another of the true legacies of my upbringing.

As I helped Granny make the beds, she would once again tell the story about when she and Grandpa were lying in bed. He would say "Mabel, I'm a going to spit right straight up; you better cover up your head." And when she did, she would discover that he had just passed gas. She would uproariously laugh each time. I watched an interview with Larry, the Cable Guy. He admits to using flatulent jokes as part of his standup routine. When asked about the off-color nature of his material, his reply is always the same: "That's funny, right there now, I do not care who you are." Reckon, he had a Southern Granny, like mine.

Dr. Young at Prescott Family Clinic says, "As long as we tell their stories, they are always with us." Granny kept the love of her life alive and well too, for, and with her youngest granddaughter and last grandchild, me.

As I write this memorial and remembrance to her honor and memory, I am reminded of Granny's sweet spirit, her warm laughter and the eternal twinkle in her eye. Granny's love of life was absolutely infectious as was her sense of humor. Granny's life taught not to take life or yourself, too seriously.

To paraphrase Bach in Illusions, "You're not going make it out alive anyway. You might as well laugh, sing, and dance on your way to the gallows. They'll call you a dreamer, but then again, there are worse things". In my way of thinking, the above passage describes Granny's view of the world, pretty accurately. I do not think she took any of this thing, called life or herself, all that seriously. She was Scotch-Irish for God's sake, where there is the music and food, and drink and dancing. There should be dancing. She taught me to do the Charleston and Jitterbug, almost from the time, I could walk. I can still see her softly permed, salt and pepper head swaying gently to the melodies of String of Pearls and Moonlight Serenade.

The highest compliment to, for, or from a Southern gal is to be deemed a hoot and the lowest is to be deemed tacky. Somewhere between tacky and a royal hoot is where Granny lived most days.

She would never have put dark meat in her chicken salad, but if she was angry, she could peel paint right off the walls. God, she was cute.

I do not believe she ever owned or drove a car. She did not have to. One of her children, grandchildren or their families would tote her where ever and whenever she wanted to go. We were all in Granny's service with all parties aware of this fact. We served by choice, not out of fear. She led with her heart and taught us to be led by our hearts. To quote her favorite scripture regarding authority and the law, "not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

I have a colleague who is my personal photographer. Recently, he took pictures at a class termination meeting at Burger Barn in Arkadelphia where he said to my students, "She's

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always right,” to get them to smile. He then followed it with, “She who must be obeyed.” The students just laughed. Serving as comic relief runs deep within my family of origin.

She bought me my first play compact, lipstick, and rouge. I still have the little compact and smile each time I discover it. I have a bottle of Evening in Paris Perfume on my dressing table in her honor along with a replica bottle of Blue Waltz, which is little girl’s cologne from that era. My, how profoundly Granny affected and continued to influence my life.

She really was a demure, petite little thing. But, when she needed or wanted to be she was ten feet tall and bulletproof. I come by mine, naturally. In the words of Hank Williams Jr., “It’s a family tradition.”

Granny was just a waif in size, but definitely the Matriarch of the Arnold Clan. She died when I was an undergraduate at Henderson. It must have been early on because I can remember going to the chapel at the hospital in Camden to study for one of Dr. Ira Don Richard’s finals in Western Civilizations. One of my favorite quotes regarding memory goes: “Memory is like a small child walking along a beach picking up seashells. You never know which one she will pick up that will become a treasure.”

Mabel Dickerson Arnold. Dynamite comes in small packages, bigger than life, and yet as fragile as a string of pearls. She was one of the true treasures of my life and my beloved Grandmother.

P. S. Is that popcorn I smell? L~

### **Biographical Sketch**

Linda G. (Brown) English is a native of Prescott, Arkansas. She taught for twelve years in the public schools of southwest Arkansas before returning to her alma mater, Henderson State University in 2001 to teach. Currently, Linda is Professor of Counselor Education at the Teachers College of her beloved Henderson.

Linda has been published in numerous regional, state and national publications. She has also published in both professional journals and socio-cultural venues including *The Old Time Chronicle*, *The Southern Standard*, *The Journal of Poetry Therapy*, and *Tales from the South*.

Linda lives in the farmhouse, which is the setting for many of her stories, with Emma Clare and Babe, her green and black tabby and black Labrador retriever, respectively.

## **Dyslexia in Higher Education**

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### **Abstract**

There are an increasing number of students with dyslexia enrolled in postsecondary education. Despite guaranteed accommodations (Rehabilitations Act of 1973), many of them struggle to keep up with the rigorous academic demands. Reasons for this struggle include reductions in accommodations at the postsecondary levels from secondary levels making it difficult for many students to complete reading assignments and projects. Because students are independent in college, they must also strive to strike a balance in their social activities and academic priorities. The following study reports that Amy, a student at a state university in North