

Moralyzin' Maggie

Submitted by Sarah Fitz-Claridge on 17 September, 2003 - 22:29

Eponymous Anonymous

My granny tells a story about a gal from these parts. They used to call her Moralyzin' Maggie. She surely did like to remind folks of the do's and don'ts of everyday life. She surely didn't have many friends.

Moralyzin' Maggie has come to my mind these past few days since I've been reading the [TCS List](#) and a thread there that has me thinking about how kids learn about right and wrong and if that has anything at all to do with finding [common preferences](#) (see, I'm getting the [TCS lingo](#) down!).

This “finding [common preferences](#)” sounds good to me. That's exactly what we try to do around here, figuring out what each of us is wantin' and how to get it, without stompin' on anyone else's toes in the process. That is the focus, preferences, and finding the ones we all like. The part about avoiding others' toes is where the morality comes in, I guess.

Now, if a one had any question in their mind about whether or not their preference had anything bad in it, Moralyzin' Maggie would be the first to tell them about it. An incident comes to mind, back on one of those hot summer's days of my misspent youth, when my older brother and his gang of buddies had ridden their bikes down to the bridge over the creek down by the old mill, and were having a fine spittin' contest over the side of it. I was tagging along.

Maggie was walking her wheezy Pekinese dog along the sidewalk on the other side of the bridge when she noticed the passel of boys spittin' off the bridge, having a high ole time. She marched right over there, dragging that little dog. Poor thing, it was trying to catch its breath and get a few yaps in for good measure, as she proceeded to tell those boys in no uncertain terms that the Lord would strike them dead for spitting in the water system that serves our fine town. She spoke in stirring tones, of pollution and disease and pestilence and moral decline, her voice ringing in the ears of those boys as they pelted onto their bikes and rode off, hooting over their shoulders. I received admonishment over my choice of companions and how that would be my downfall, as I brought up the rear of the retreat.

Granny always said, “The solution to pollution is dilution”, so we couldn't for the life of us figure out what was wrong with spittin' into that big fast-moving creek. But when Brother hauled off and spit on Baby Sister's head later on that day, Mama drew the line on that spittin' habit. She let him know, in no uncertain terms, that Baby Sister had the right to occupy space in our home without being spit upon, that such behavior is a personal insult, and that if he had a problem with something Sister was doing, he, being the older and wiser big Brother, had many more avenues of recourse than to spit upon her precious little head.

After that ruckus died down, our whole family sidled on down to the local Dairy Queen ice cream store to enjoy a Dilly bar, of a lazy summer evening. Wouldn't you know? Moralyzin' Maggie was receiving her Pineapple-Strawberry Doozy sundae just as we strolled up to the take-out window. Her eyes lit up like candles in Sunday church when she saw Mother. She took no mind of the whipped cream melting onto her hand as she bustled our way.

“Mattie-Fae!” she intoned, as she clutched Mama's wrist with her free hand. “Have ye taken your hooligans in hand, as yet? They was spitting off the main creek bridge, just this day!” She was trembling with righteousness.

Mama cast a baleful eye our way, as we pretended to be absorbed in the ice cream menu on the wall. “Maggie, how's your health? I expect those young-uns were practicing for the watermelon seed spitting contest... it's a thing that children do, Maggie.” She spoke gently and gave Maggie's hand a friendly squeeze as she pried it off her arm. Mama never could see any reason to treat folks as enemies, even if they was. She figured they were simply misled; but then too, they bore watching.

I recall that at that time Gran was off galavantin' in Europe or maybe it was that trip down the Nile, I forget, but she's had many a run-in with Moralyzin' Maggie, too. Gran and Maggie, they grew up together, right here in our little town. And my granny could tell a tale or two about Maggie's own moral faux pas!

As Gran always says, “After all this is over, all that will really have mattered is how we treated each other.”

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