

## Valley District Conference Thoughts 11/2-11/4/2018

### Opening Thought

#### The Soul of a Child

As we begin our time together, I appreciate that Karen's norms have made this a safe place where all members' opinions are valued and given thoughtful and kind consideration. We may not always share the same beliefs and opinions, but we agree to discuss our concerns openly, honestly, and most of all, respectfully.

Sadly, this is not always the case elsewhere. It seems as if we are living in a time where the norm is perceived to encourage rudeness, pettiness, and blatant dishonesty. The upcoming election especially has featured numerous ads that exemplify this lack of courtesy and contain public diatribes which are often disrespectful and hurtful.

I wonder what effect all of this is having on children. To this point, former Alpha Delta Kappa State President Florence Hendricksen shared the following observations in her book of inspirational thoughts:

"Each day you are carving, not upon stone or marble, but upon the precious minds of young boys and girls. Therefore, be careful with what tools you carve and how you use them."

She then included the following poem:

The soul of a child is the loveliest flower  
That grows in the garden of the world.  
Its climb is from weakness to knowledge and power,  
To the sky from the clay of the furrow.  
To beauty and sweetness it grows under care;  
Neglected, 'tis ragged and wild.  
'Tis a plant that is tender, but wondrously rare,  
The sweet, wistful soul of a child.  
Be tender, O gardener, and give it its share  
Of moisture, of warmth, and of light.  
And let it not lack for the painstaking care  
To protect it from frost and from blight.  
A glad day will come when its bloom shall unfold,  
It will seem that an angel has smiled,  
Reflecting the beauty and sweetness untold  
In the sensitive soul of a child.

These thoughts are true for anyone, child or not. Let's strive to be tender gardeners as we tackle the challenges facing our executive board this weekend.

### Conference Opening Thought

Good morning, fellow Valley Alpha Delta Kappa sisters! It is so nice to be here with you. For those of you who don't know me, I am Virginia Riding, and I am your State Chaplain for the next biennium.

My job is to start our conference with an inspiring thought. As I wracked my brain for an inspiring topic, it came to me that our conference always falls near (and sometimes on) two very important days, Election Day and Veteran's Day, and that both of these days are important memorials to our freedom. So I decided that we needed to reflect a bit on freedom.

I love the fact that we live in a country where we, as women, have the freedom to plan and carry out a conference that will impact and educate us. Our organization exists because seventy years ago, strong, brave women had the freedom to found it.

But freedom is a personal thing. It can mean different things to each of us.

A few months ago, I was lucky enough to be given a book of inspirational thoughts. These thoughts were compiled by Florence Hendricksen for Alpha Delta Kappa in 1966. Florence was a member of my chapter, Gamma, as well as a State President. Her thoughts on freedom include the following:

Freedom is an open door, but we must choose to walk through it.

Freedom is a ladder, but we must choose to climb it.

Freedom is ours now, but what we choose to do with it is up to us.

Freedom is an invitation to be creative: to paint, sing, carve, write, or build to our heart's desire.

Freedom is the right to be ourselves, to make mistakes, to fail and then try again, and to know that no failure is final because freedom always gives us a second chance.

Freedom is something to be shared, for it is the opportunity to dedicate our lives to the service of others. It thrives on the interaction of our thoughts and ideas.

Freedom is a wide horizon gleaming with promise.

Freedom is a gift, but like any gift, if we don't guard it carefully, it can be stolen away.

We should bask in the freedom we have but never take it for granted.

So as we start our day, let's relish our freedom. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, we have the freedom to be as happy as we make up our minds to be. So let's choose an attitude of happiness as we freely gather and celebrate the Valley District of Alpha Delta Kappa.

## Lunch Thought

As we get ready to enjoy our yummy lunch, let's take a moment to be thankful.

As Noella Aanulds wrote, "Practicing gratitude is a very powerful tool to shift your attitude from the things you don't have to the things you do have. This alone will make you feel better."

Oprah Winfrey stated, "Be thankful for what you have and you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough."

And as H. U. Westermeyer pointed out, the Pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts. Few Americans have ever been more impoverished than those souls were. Nevertheless, they set aside a day of Thanksgiving.

Thank you, Bakersfield Council, for this lovely venue, day, and meal. We are truly thankful for you efforts.

## Conference Closing Thought

Whew! We've covered a lot today. I hope you have been inspired to now return to your chapters and share what you've learned.

To close our busy day, I'd like to share a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It speaks of the restorative spirit of nature, something many of us Valley gals know firsthand.

### Out in the Fields With God

The little cares that fretted me,  
I lost them yesterday  
Among the fields above the sea  
Among the winds at play.  
Among the lowing of the herds  
The rustling of the trees,  
Among the singing of the birds,  
The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what may happen,  
I cast them all away

Among the clover-scented grass,  
Among the new-mown hay.

Among the husking of the corn  
Where drowsy poppies nod,  
Where ill thoughts die and good are born,  
Out in the fields with God.

Thanks again for attending. And in the words of Susan B. Anthony, "Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it." If you haven't already done so, don't forget to vote on Tuesday.

### Reconvening Thought

Recently, I read an article about the red poppy, also known as the Remembrance Poppy, that is often worn on Veterans Day. I must admit that I had no idea what this was or what it represented. In fact, as a child growing up, I really only knew that Veterans Day meant we got a holiday from school.

But the article stated that the red poppy is worn to commemorate military personnel who died in war. Apparently the tradition started in 1921 and was inspired by the World War I poem, "In Flanders Fields" which was written by Canadian physician, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. He wrote the poem on May 3, 1915 after witnessing the death of his friend and fellow soldier the day before.

The opening lines of "In Flanders Fields" refer to the many red poppies which were the first flowers to grow on the graves of World War I soldiers in Flanders, Belgium. The poem begins:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That mark our place. And in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

Wearing a Remembrance Poppy on Veterans Day may be a dying tradition, but it is proudly continued by many who have relatives that gave their lives in military service. One particularly poignant story was shared with me by my friend, Loran Hugh Parker.

"I will wear my poppy in proud honor of my nephew, A T Howell," he stated. "He was a medic who was killed carrying a soldier to safety after having treated his wounds.

Loren continued. "The soldier A T carried from the battlefield was later interviewed. He stated that minutes after he was wounded, he remembered the biggest man he had ever seen kneeling over him and treating his injuries. The man appeared to be six feet five inches and 300 pounds of solid muscle. After treating him, the giant picked the soldier up with ease and carried him to a waiting helicopter. On the way, the wounded soldier heard a gunshot, and the medic fell, but while falling, he maneuvered himself so that he fell first and the soldier fell on top of him. Without a doubt, the soldier knew that he owed his life to that medic, A T."

A T's story of sacrifice is but one of many. Perhaps some of you here have equally moving tales of the bravery and selflessness of our veterans.

I hope that the tradition of the Remembrance Poppy continues. I hope that we as a nation continue to honor our brave veterans. And I know that on this 100th Veterans Day, when I see someone wearing a red poppy, I will now understand that it proudly honors those heroes who gave their all for the freedoms we enjoy.

#### Executive Board Closing Thought

Once again, our time has flown by. We have discussed, strategized, and most importantly, bonded. Our group continues to grow as a team, and the more time we spend together, the stronger we become.

A wise person once said that thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle without diminishing in the least the life of the first candle. Just so, happiness never decreases by being shared. I challenge you to be that candle, and to share the happiness you get from being a member of Alpha Delta Kappa with the rest of your chapter.

I wish all of you a safe trip home and look forward to our next adventure in January!