

Fall Inspiration

I was languishing in my recliner the other night. I was in need of my next dose of medication and feeling pretty lousy when I heard an unusual sound: falling water. My first thought was that a sprinkler had burst and was shooting a geyser of water we couldn't afford to waste into the shrubbery. Woozy and a bit disoriented, I carefully shuffled to the front door to investigate. With great trepidation, I opened it, only to find that it was pouring rain! Rain! I could actually smell the plants radiating their joy as they soaked up the precious water. My heart soared as it realized we'd made it through another brutal San Joaquin Valley summer.

Life is sometimes like those summers. We can often wilt in the unbearable heat of anger and frustration, choke on the dry, dusty, air of tension and a lack of productivity, and feel that we have simply reached the end of our rope. But then the soothing rain of friendship washes it all away and leaves us feeling ready to keep going. It reminds us that better weather, and better things are on their way.

I am so happy to be back with you, my ADK sisters, and I look forward to renewed inspiration as we grow together this weekend.

Out in the Fields With God

To close our meeting, I'd like to share a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Living in the country as I do, I have experienced what she claims about the restorative spirit of nature.

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.

The Art of Happiness

It has been said that happiness does not depend upon what happens outside of you, but by what happens inside of you, and that it is measured by the spirit in which you meet the problems of life. Happiness, we are told, is a state of mind and doesn't come from doing what we like, but instead from liking what we do.

Happiness comes from putting our hearts in our work and doing it with joy and enthusiasm. It grows out of harmonious relationships with others based on attitudes of good will, tolerance, understanding, and love.

As Abraham Lincoln once said, "We are as happy as we make up our minds to be." So let's choose an attitude of happiness as we spend our day with our Northern District sisters, and let's inspire them to make that same attitude choice, too.

Inspiration for a Great Northern District Conference

Good morning, ladies! My name is Virginia Riding and I am your State Chaplain. I was so happy when I heard the theme for Karen's biennium. Not the "Ride the Wave" part so much; I'm a Central Valley girl and as I've told the Executive Board already, the only surfing I'm ever likely to do is on the Internet. But inspiration? Now that I understand. I mean, what do good teachers do every day? They inspire! And just because some of us have retired doesn't mean we've stopped. As ADK sisters, every one of us is an inspiration.

I'd like to share a poem I found in a collection of inspirational thoughts. The booklet, "Thoughts to Live By", was edited by Florence Hendricksen, a past California State President, in 1966, but with a bit of tweaking here and there, the sentiments are just as appropriate today as they were then.

This is entitled, "The Art of Achievement".

You hold in your hand the camel's hair brush of a painter of life.

You stand before the vast white canvas of time.

The paints are your thoughts, emotions, and acts.

Through the power of your creative imagination, you catch a vision. You dream a dream.

You visualize yourself as the person you want to be.

You strive to make the ideal in your mind become a reality on the canvas of time.

You select and mix the positive colors of heart, mind, and spirit into the qualities of effective living: patience, determination, endurance, self-discipline, work, and love. Each moment of your life is a brush stroke in the painting of your growth. The art of achievement is the art of making life a masterpiece.

Let's make this Northern District Conference another masterpiece to add to the art gallery of our ADK experiences.

The Challenge of Change

Whew! What a busy but exciting day. There's certainly a lot going on with ADK, isn't there? Lots of change. And the hard fact is that each of us must somehow cope with that change.

Things just don't stand still. The world is changing around us, and although we might feel secure and comfortable with how things are and not want them to change, we must keep pace. We all know that frequently, just when we start to feel accustomed to things as they are, life pushes us in new directions. It sure has for me. I think I was the most surprised person at the convention when my name was announced as the new State Chaplain. In fact, there are actually several of us who are new to the State Executive Board, and almost all of the veterans are now tackling new jobs.

It's human nature to be reluctant to give up the old and the familiar, but to grow, we must look forward to the new with eager anticipation. Once we have adjusted, we often realize that change can be good for us.

As we begin this two year adventure, we need to keep in mind the words of early-day California teacher and poet, Edwin Markham.

Yesterdays are the shells we shed;
The best is always up ahead.
There's always some new world for winning;
And every end is a new beginning.

Our time has flown, but it was fruitful. We accomplished much and I hope inspired you. Share what you've learned and inspire your chapter to thrive.

Freedom

I love the fact that we live in a country where we, as women, have the freedom to do what we just did. Women were free to run a meaningful conference that had an

impact and educated other women. Seventy years ago, women who were strong and brave were able to found our organization because of the freedom our country allows.

But freedom is a personal thing. It's an open door, but we must be the ones to walk through it.

Freedom is a ladder, but we must climb it.

Freedom is ours now, and what we choose to do with it is up to us. We can use it to reach our highest goal.

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

Freedom is our right to be ourselves, to make mistakes, to fail and try again. To know that no failure is final because freedom always give 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 depends on the interaction of our thoughts, ideas, and ideals.

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 from us.

Bask in the freedom we have, but don't ever take it for granted.

The Soul of a Child

Several of us still interact with children regularly, whether as students, children, grandchildren, etc. But these thoughts are appropriate to be kept in mind for any of our interactions.

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

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.

A Tribute to October

October is a special month. For many, it is the time when nature gives its final hurrah, that it has saved the best for last, and that October is the grand finale of the year. Author Hal Boyle writes, "The birds love it, the beasts love it, and man himself now stands upon the summit of the year."

But October is extra special for Alpha Delta Kappa. It was the month originally selected for our California State Convention and is now the month during which we honor our founders. Our chapter and Xi are having a joint Founder's Day Celebration this Tuesday, and their President Mary Ann Englehart and I have had fun researching and planning.

I love that our organization has a long, rich history of educational excellence, altruism, and world understanding. How nice to be among professionals who are kind, friendly, and supportive.

I believe in ADK as I know all of you do, too. Let's make our founders proud and keep our chapters strong. And in the iconic words of Roy and Dale, Happy Trails to you, until we meet again (in Bakersfield)!