



A life well lived

By: Cindy Grosso

There is an art to a life well-lived.

We have so many good things about this time in history in which we live. We have gained many capabilities. We live in a time where we can do things faster, we have more information available, we have more options, and with less effort we can take advantage of many things.

However, I find so interesting that we have more conveniences than ever before, yet we seem to have less time. This loss of time has resulted in a trend to be less gracious toward one another. This lack of time often means we do not have time to hold the door for someone or say “good morning” or allow someone in front of us into traffic. We have to ask ourselves; is living faster living better?

In this sound bite society of one-second living, microwave ovens, drive through dining, instant technology, faster everything, many of the values with which we grew up have been left behind at lightning speed.

Almost gone are the days of beautiful home dinner parties and gracious entertaining. I remember the days when we used our good china, we ate in the dining room, we were taught how to dine at the dinner table, and we actually sat down together as a family, ate a meal, and shared conversation and values. I was taught many things around the dining table, and at the time I did not realize how valuable they would become.

I learned the value of writing a thank-you note, how to have a conversation with someone, the value of complimenting someone, in addition to being encouraged and feeling supported on my journey of life.



It is interesting that we have overcome some of the most technical challenges known to man, yet I feel we are losing one of the most important fundamentals known to man: gracious living.

Why is it that gracious living should be important and not just the memory of our past? What does gracious really mean and why is it valuable?

Webster defines gracious as “Very polite in a way that shows respect; Being kind and courteous.”

Yes, things change as they have since the beginning of time. Every generation has new and different challenges they will face. But one thing that has been constant throughout civilization is the understanding that to have a civilization, you must be civil. A key element of civility is being gracious.

Throughout history, no nation wanted to be seen as barbaric. Civility was important to survival and power, both individually and holistically as a nation.

Being gracious is not about socio-economic status. It is not reserved for some and not provided for others. It is a value that we hold dear because we have to have respect for ourselves first in order to give respect to others. When we are gracious to others, we have a better chance of getting it back. The value is that our perception of how we think others see us, helps us form part of our self-confidence. So, one of my mother’s dinner table value lessons was right: often what you give you will receive back or you will reap what you sow.

Gracious living is about understanding that we all have the same 168 hours in a week, so are we being intentional about how we will invest our time? Today, I am much more interested in my not-to-do-list, as I understand that busyness is often a distraction that can be used as an excuse or that keeps me from really living my life well. This helps me to establish my priorities and eliminate the distractions.

So, the simple act of learning table manners was not simply about holding the fork or spoon correctly, it was about learning the attitude of self-respect. It wasn’t just the fact that we ate dinner together using our good china or eating in the dining room that so was important.



It was important because we learned that we were important, valued and loved. (Important, by the way, is not entitled; that was another one of those dining table lessons) When we learned the importance of writing a thank-you note and how to write one, it was not about the action of writing the note; we were learning the attitude of gratitude.

Living well is not reading about someone else's life. It is about being intentional about living our own whether that is cooking a wonderful meal and setting a beautiful table for family, friends or even for yourself, or using your good china and dining by candlelight. It could be having someone over for afternoon tea or having a tea party even by yourself or writing a hand-written note to someone. It is taking the time and making the effort to let you know that you are important and that the people you are with are important and valued as well.

Being gracious is really not something you do....it is something you are. It is a lifestyle.

Doctor John Dewey, a famous American philosopher once said being important is one of the deepest needs we have as human beings, so making others feel important is fulfilling one of the deepest needs people have. The value of fulfilling this is that a person may like you better, and maybe then you have a better chance to do business with him/her, or maybe, you have a better chance to become friends with them.

Someone once told me, "Good people skills are getting people to like you. Great people skills are getting them to like themselves for having been around you. "

Being gracious is so simple and simply great. It is the art of living well.

