

20 TALKING POINTS
FOR
NATIONALLY SYNDICATED RADIO TALK SHOW
“gjensen@familiesonlinemagazine.com”
AUGUST 25, 2008

To: Geraldine Jensen
From: Dr. Marlena Uhrik, Author
In Grandpa's Hands

1. What was the inspiration for your newest book, *In Grandpa's Hands*?

The inspiration for *In Grandpa's Hands* came to me as I sat at my Dad's hospital bedside during his 85th year after his near-death experience. At that moment, I realized that there was a depth of love and gratitude for him in our family that he had never fully experienced and that it was time to express it. The concept for the book and much of the text were completed with simplicity that very day.

2. How did the intent of this book's message develop over time?

As *In Grandpa's Hands* developed, it became much more than a personal tribute to my Dad; it became a conduit for delivering a powerful message to express the love, gratitude and the profound magnitude of shared moments between generations.

3. What have readers shared with you so far about *In Grandpa's Hands*?

Readers experience grateful memories of their families and find themselves in close conversations of connectedness. Readers find themselves touched, moved and inspired by the simplicity and profound message of this book. I have had grown men read this book and cry.

4. *In Grandpa's Hands* already has an incredible amount of outstanding endorsements from teachers, medical doctors, and politicians and in one case, a five-time Emmy Award winning director and producer. What do you attribute that to?

I have been very blessed that I have so many people in my life that have already seen the book and have caught the vision and message I wanted to convey. I attribute the strong endorsements to a network of friends who know somebody, who, in turn knows somebody, and the word has spread. Friends sent copies of this book to their friends and before I knew it, accolades were coming in from all around. I'm extremely excited about the early endorsements of this book.

5. I understand that the book has already won some awards. Tell us about that.

So far, The Best You Can Be Foundation has announced *In Grandpa's Hands* as an Award-Winning Book Recommendation for Families. I have a quote from them that says, "Truly a life affirming testament to the deep connection shared between grandparents and their grandchildren." Also, Children of the New Earth has included *In Grandpa's Hands* as one of "the products we love." P.S. *In Grandpa's Hands* went on to win the top Mom's Choice Award.

6. What are some of the messages that you want people to take away from experiencing this book?

This book is designed to promote communication and emotional connectedness that comes from a nurturing relationship of fundamental importance. *In Grandpa's Hands* celebrates the relationship between Grandpas and their grandchildren. The book is so beautifully illustrated; this book is a work of art that communicates the reassurance of a caring relationship, a sense of well-being, and sense of future that comes through *In Grandpa's Hands*. Moments shared between grandparents and their grandchildren are moments to cherish. These are the times when hope and promise are present. *In Grandpa's Hands* calls forth the special bond that occurs between the generations as they reach out to teach each other the lessons in life and touch each other's spirit.

7. So, who are Grandpas to you?

Grandpas are the keepers of the family, the strength, the history, and wisdom of generations. Grandpas teach us the things we need to know for everyday life and carry us into our future.

8. Your own grandfathers must have played an important role in your life. Tell us about that.

Unfortunately, I only met my grandfathers once when I was very young. My mother's father lived on the east coast when we lived on the west coast and I only have pictures of him holding me when I was a baby. My dad's dad lived on a farm in Nebraska and I only met him once when I was seven years old. Even though I really did not know my grandparents, I know that they had a tremendous influence on my parents and the lives they touched through the stories I have heard about them.

9. What are you currently doing now besides writing books?

I have been an educator for over forty years and have a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership. I have been engaged with all aspects of education from hands-on teaching in

an elementary classroom to writing books and curriculum for college classes. Throughout my career, my focus has been on prevention/intervention.

I am currently working as a consultant at the California Department of Education. I help design prevention /intervention programs and services for six and a half million kids in the state of California. Specifically, I am the lead for the Prevention of Underage Drinking, Character Education and Student Assistance Programs.

10. Tell us more about the concept of prevention/intervention and how does this book tie-in with the work that you are still doing?

Alarming statistics tell us that there is a strong, unprecedented undercurrent of challenges pulling at our children today. It is clear that many of our children are making choices early on in their lives, choices that will influence their lives forever. For instance, children are faced with decisions to make about use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco use ---even choices around gang involvement and violence. Our children are faced with issues such as cyber bullying and cutting and things we never heard about when we were growing up. I believe that *In Grandpa's Hands* speaks to one of the fundamental aspects of prevention/intervention known as resiliency.

11. What does the research say about resiliency?

Research tells us that one of the most influential factors in the success of a child's life is close, meaningful relationships that they have with a caring adult. The need for generations to connect with one another provides opportunities for sharing a sense of continuity.

I have seen how some kids "make it" and some kids do not. Virtually every time young people tell their stories of being resilient through difficult times, there is one outstanding person, often a grandparent, who believed in them. It was that one person's love and support that made all the difference. *In Grandpa's Hands* is a tribute to all Grandpas and is a powerful reminder of their contribution to the promise and hope for the future of all generations.

12. So, you are saying that close, meaningful relationships with an adult play a role in how children succeed?

Yes. Caring relationships, meaningful participation in school/family/community (through groups and organizations), and high expectations can lay the foundation for children to succeed throughout their lives even when they are faced with big challenges.

13. Do you feel that the role of grandparents today has changed?

Yes. We see more and more grandparents taking an active role in their grandchildren's lives. In many cases, grandparents are raising their grandchildren for one reason or another. And in some cases, the opposite is true---grandparents do not see their grandchildren because of living apart from one another.

14. How have we as a society responded to the needs of grandparents, especially those who are raising their grandchildren?

There are many support services for grandparents. Almost all major cities have a Department of Aging and of course, AARP has information for seniors in this role. I think we will be seeing more and more programs and services for grandparents.

15. What do you see for the future as far as grandparents?

I think our role as grandparents is evolving. So many of us are baby boomers and our children are having children. I think there is going to be a whole new emphasis and respect for the "older generation."

16. I understand there is an official Grandparents Day?

Yes. When Jimmy Carter was President of the United States, he signed a Resolution for Grandparents Day as an official acknowledgement for grandparents. Grandparents Day is always in September on the Sunday after Labor Day. This year Grandparents Day is September 7, 2008.

17. I understand that you have written other books. Tell us about that.

I have written two other books. My first book is called *A Guidebook for Family Day Care Providers---Surviving in a Home Full of Kids*. My second book is called *The ABC's of Home Improvement---A Special Book for Families*. Along with my newest book, *In Grandpa's Hands*, there will be *In Grandpa's Hands* Note Cards and Calendar that include illustrations from the book.

18. I understand you have received numerous awards and have received national and international recognition.

I have received recognition in the US Congressional Record for the work that I have done in my community. I was also privileged to be an Olympic Torchbearer in 1996.

I was also in South Africa with the Citizen Ambassador Program/UNICEF working with educators from that country

I have also received awards from Rotary Clubs, the Public Education Service Award from the California PTA, and the Service to Mankind Award from the Salvation Army.

19. Do you have grandchildren of your own?

Yes. I have 3 grandchildren. I have a granddaughter who is almost 17 years old, and another granddaughter who is 2 and half years old and a grandson who is 8 months old.

20. What are your parting words?

Cherish each moment you have here on earth and know that your grandchildren are part of you. Everything you say or do will contribute to who your grandchildren become in the world. They are the contribution waiting to happen, they are the future unfolding.