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# On The Burdens Of Being A Future Great

By Margie Snowden North



Illustration by Paul Stone

I fully expect someday to become an is-now (you know, the opposite of a has-been). I do some writing, sing a little, know some chords on both the piano and guitar, teach a passable Sunday School lesson, and my five children would vouch for my cooking.

I'm not sure yet on which area of endeavor I will suddenly, marvelously excel, rising dramatically to the top of that particular field. Frankly, that is not what concerns me.

My dilemma is that it is likely I am not leaving behind enough data for biographical purposes. I mean--who keeps letters anymore? (Who wrties them, for that matter?)

At one time I wondered why George

Washington, Abe Lincoln, and others wrote such loquacious letters. I believe I have the answer now. They assumed that public eminence would one day be their lots, and they knew the multitudes would hunger to know each intimate detail of their lives. Hence, the chatty letters. The ledgers. The diaries.

I used to keep diaries ("April 3, 1977: Planted squash today; still too cold for okra"). No one has bothered to inquire about where I keep them. It is a fear of mine that they will be fortuitously disposed of in my absence (Ben likes a clean closet). Then no one would ever know (for example) that in the summer of '64 I sold my first story and received a small fortune for it (So it was \$12.50,

to be more exact. I can assure you that in 1964 that \$12.50 did constitute a small fortune to the North family.)

I have a cousin, Shirley, with whom I exchanged some extraordinary correspondence back in our pre-teen years. I trust she has saved the letters she received from me because they will give my future biographers some vivid insight into my personality. ("Dear Shirley," I once wrote. "How are you? I am fine. We picked cotton again today. It sure was cold. . ." and on and on.)

If Shirley will send the letters to me at the same address I had before (Rt. 1, Erick, Oklahoma), I will see that she is properly reimbursed upon my *annus mirabilis*. (For those of you who have

had no formal training in Latin, that phrase is defined on page 55 of the **RANDOM HOUSE DICTIONARY**. I would give the definition straight-out, but you never see that done.)

I am sure that my future adherents will be as indebted to Shirley as I. After all, this is all *pro bono publico* (Ibid., p. 1055).

(Speaking of letters, may I insert a notice here? On June 26, 1969, I received a personal letter from Andrae Crouch. This was while he was a little-known choir director in Pacoima, California. If anyone is presently working on his bio, the letter—or at least a photo-copy—may be purchased for a price. Contact me at 405-526-3685.

It is the little things that make up a life—and believe me, I have experienced many little things. So George Washington had Valley Forge. Personally, I think the day Justin had his surprise birthday party (I was the one surprised) and I glanced out to find 29 youngsters storming off the bus and toward the house—well, that would tighten any loosely structured history of anybody's life. I hope it will go into the biography. But I'm concerned that everybody has forgotten that day except me (and

perhaps the little lad who was knocked out with the baseball bat. He threatened to sue, but I was able to convince him that it could happen to practically anyone when she is attempting to restore order. I certainly didn't *try* to do it.)

It is truly a problem, this lack of biographical resources that I foresee. A possible recourse would be to simply write an autobiography now, before success explodes in my face, while there is sufficient time, before the basic facts of my life become distended with the telling and re-telling.

The public would have a rare opportunity to know the real me. There would be no fluff. Everything would be straight from the shoulder, right off the cuff. I believe I owe it to my public to allow them to see me as I was. (And, by the way, I will probably tell in the autobiography exactly why Andrae Crouch wrote to me, in case anyone is interested.)

I intend to start researching right away. I'll begin by digging out all the old check stubs (for they tell reams about people). I believe I will begin writing more letters instead of chancing phone calls. ("My dear Mr. Masters,

your account is now 60 days past due. A payment from you would greatly enhance our ability to see to our own debts, which are many.")

For that matter, I might even ask folks to record the phone calls I *do* make. ("Hello. I'm calling about what I believe to be a *drastic* mistake in our water bill. . .") I will immediately begin keeping a more detailed diary. If George Washington can be remembered as writing at age 14, "Rise early, that by habit it may become familiar, agreeable, healthy, and profitable. It may be irksome for a while to do this, but that will soon wear off," surely my maxim, "Early to bed and early to rise makes sense but is well nigh impossible when you have five children" would certainly be noteworthy to my future following.

Yes, I'd better get started. A person never knows when she will be unexpectedly confronted with success. There will be so little time then. And writing my memoirs certainly beats just sitting here. ■

*MARGIE SNOWDEN NORTH, certainly no new name to regular WESTVIEW readers, has once again entertained us with humorous appeal.*

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