

Sunshine Sisters: A Celebration of Legacies (2010)

Molly Nece (www.LegacyProducers.com)

The Legacy of Six

Anne Sourbeer Morris

*Create generational legacies: Garner inspirations from the past ... Live those inspirations in the present
... Inspire the future!*

When my eldest daughter was born in 1975, five generations of strong women lived: Beulah, the great, great grandmother; Anna, the great grandmother; Patricia, the grandmother; Anne (yours truly) the mother, and Ami, the daughter. In May 2009, Cadence Anne was born unto Ami – the great, great, great granddaughter of Beulah

Cade represents the sixth generation in a lineage of strong, intelligent, vibrant women whom, in my lifetime, have had the honor to know and love. In 2010, only three generations remain, but I recall vividly bringing my daughter Ami, then only days old, to the hospital room of my great grandmother. My great grandmother “waited” for Ami to be born. Although her life was ending, she was determined to see her great, great grandchild. With us in that small hospital room were my grandmother and my mother. Five generations of women were present and living in that moment in time. What an impact, the moment had upon me and I trust, on future generations. The moment was a unique and cherished gift.

Sunshine Inspiration: Fully live and cherish each moment.

As I ponder that moment and the women who shared it, I think of the specific influence that each woman has had on my life – the inspiration they have given me. The influences and inspirations have become legacies passed from generation to generation. I think of the legacies of my great grandmother, grandmother, and mother as gifts that each has offered to me. Each of the gifts have inspired me. Through me, the gifts of the past are offered to my daughter and now to my granddaughter.

The gifts given to me by my great grandmother, grandmother, and mother were embodied in their persona and have become a part of me. Beulah offered the gift of **determination** and Anna the gift of **grace**. Patricia shared her **intellect**. Each offered me inspiration. I have accepted the gifts of the past and have lived them to the best of my ability.

As I have been inspired by the past and, I in turn, strive to inspire the future. I see Beulah’s determination in my daughter, Ami whose gift is **perseverance** in the face of adversity. I see in my granddaughter Cade, the gift of **wonder**, as the world and those who love her, inspire and motivate her. The Legacy of Six is embodied in six strong women. The Legacy of Six is **determination, grace, intellect, inspiration, perseverance, and wonder**.

Sunshine Inspiration: Strive to inspire ... Live your legacy.

Beulah - Determination

“I can see her”, said Beulah, my great grandmother, as I brought her great, great granddaughter Ami, only days old, into the hospital room. Five generations of strong women crowded into that small room to celebrate new life and a life well lived. Gammy, as we called my great grandmother, had waited weeks for that moment. During those weeks, Gammy frequently asked, “When will Anne be here? I want to see the baby.”

Gammy was blind. She died at age 89 within the week of “seeing” Ami. In her final days, and throughout her life, Gammy demonstrated great **determination** and strong will. She was determined to meet Ami and she did! It was a joyous occasion!

The stories of a strong willed Beulah were infamous. She, for example, was determined that her only child Anna would go to college. Gammy believed in the American dream and was determined that her daughter would lead a better life than she had. She possessed the wisdom to know the importance of education to her daughter’s future. Her determination was realized. Anna graduated from Dickinson College. Anna, was also determined to fulfill her destiny. Anna became the first of now four generations of women to be graduated from college – Anna, Patricia, Anne, and Ami. Beulah’s legacy – determination - lives in us all.

Sunshine Inspiration: Pursue your dreams ... Never, never, never give up!

Anna – Grace

I was so blessed to have Anna in my life. My grandmother was my best friend and confidant. When I think of her, I think of **grace**. She was an elegant, poised woman. Anna made me feel special. She made each of her grandchildren and the great grandchildren known to her feel special. Anna taught me how to love unconditionally. She also taught me the protocols of society and graceful living. I recall Anna’s determination, the legacy of her mother, to assure that I, her only granddaughter was schooled in the social graces. Ah, yes, I remember ballroom dancing class well! Moreover, I recall Sunday dinners at the Hill Café where “proper manners” were the underlying theme of the day.

Anna was the wife of a prominent judge and true to her generation, she played the role with grace and dignity, deferring to her husband in social and household matters. Sadly, Anna was widowed in her late fifties. While other women of her generation may have found it challenging to cope, I observed my grandmother survive and thrive in the face of adversity.

As a child, I vividly recall observing my grandmother demonstrate great skill and intelligence, in managing her affairs after the death of my grandfather, while serving as the matriarch of her extended family and reaching out to those in need. Anna had accepted the gifts of determination and education from her mother. She demonstrated caring for others. Anna lived grace. She demonstrated courage and dignity in the face of challenge. Anna’s legacy lives on.

Sunshine Inspiration: Be courageous in the face of challenge

Patricia – Intellect

On the doorstep was a Russian newspaper filled with words unknown to me. I brought the paper into my mother's home. Patricia was studying Russian – books, magazines, and newspapers filled with Russian text were everywhere. Patricia was self-taught. I might add that my mother was learning Russian after teaching herself French, as well. Oh, yes, Patricia was in her mid-70s at the time. My mother was a brilliant, incredibly well read, intellectually driven woman. She was the second, of the four generations to attend college. It was expected of her and she thrived in intellectual environments. Her legacy to her four children, handed down from her grandmother, Beulah, was teaching her children the value of education and demonstrating her **intellect**. However, not secondarily, her legacy was also one of outreach to those in need. Patricia fought for that in which she believed.

Upon reflection, the most influential action my mother took was attending the March on Washington, with Martin Luther King, Jr. For this, I admire her deeply. To do so in her generation demonstrated courage, determination, and an undying sensitivity to the plight of those less fortunate. To attend the March on Washington brought my mother much criticism. Despite the criticism, Patricia stood for what she believed. She demonstrated great integrity and courage. Patricia accepted the legacies from her past and lived them. Patricia cared deeply about social inequities and took action – a legacy that I, too, have accepted.

Sunshine Inspiration: Stand for that in which you believe. Live with integrity.

Anne – Inspiration

Determination, grace, intellect ... gifts passed on to me from past generations. It is my charge to cherish and nurture these gifts. It is my charge to live the legacies passed on to me and to in turn, pass these gifts on to future generations. I have learned from the lessons of the past. I have observed and have been truly inspired. I continue to be inspired by the people and events surrounding me. As a child, I was like a sponge, observing and learning for all with whom I came in contact. I continue to learn from and be inspired by others. I see life as full of **inspiration**. I am perennially grateful for that which has been given me.

Generally, my glass is “half-full!” I strive to be positive and enthusiastic within the context of my humanness. Of course, humans are imperfect and I am no exception. But that does not stop me or us from seeking joy and inspiration, or from expressing gratitude for what we have. I firmly believe that we choose how to respond to the events of our lives. I firmly believe in the power of positive thinking.

Sunshine Inspiration: Choose to be positive and grateful. Choose joy!

Our lives are a compilation of the stories that have shaped us. Everyone has a story to tell, and I am no exception. Permit me to share one of those personal stories that resulted in a dramatic change in my life. As I planned retirement in 2005, I was looking forward to new adventure. Without warning, life through me a curve ball. My thirty-five year marriage came to a sudden and shocking end. I had to make a choice – to react positively or negatively in the face of great disappointment and betrayal.

I could survive or give up. I consciously chose to survive – to survive with grace and dignity. That moment in time was among the most difficult, challenging times of my life, if not the most difficult. I was not sure

what to do, but I did know that I was determined to demonstrate strength. I did not want my daughters – Ami and Jessica - to see a weak woman. I did not want weakness in the face of challenge to be their legacy. I was determined to survive. I drew upon the legacy offered to me by Beulah, Anna, and Patricia ... determination, grace, and intellect.

Sunshine Inspiration: Create a dynamic mantra for your life's journeys.

My life mantra became ... "Survive, thrive, and prevail." I posted the sign "Never, never, never give up" on my wall ... it greeted me daily. I took action. I formed a limited liability corporation and began a doctoral program. I nurtured my "old" friendships and I went back to work in new environments. I met myriad positive women of all ages who I am grateful to call my friends, including Molly Sunshine! New work, new friends, a new life, and a universe of possibilities inspired me! The Law of Attraction was at work. I focused on a positive "can do" attitude. I learned that I "can do" and I did! I survived, I thrived, and I prevailed! I did not give up! Just call me "Dr. Anne!" My new mantra is "Inspire!" Incidentally, the core of my doctoral dissertation is educational equity ... After all; I am my mother's daughter.

Ami – Perseverance

Ami, Ami, Ami, my dear child. What challenges you have faced. What stories have shaped you ... asthma, epilepsy, alopecia universals, learning challenges? What story should I share to demonstrate your perennial **perseverance** and courage? Now, I must hasten to add that I tell Ami's story with her permission. In fact, with her permission, the childhood stories of Ami have been shared with myriad students and parents over the years. With her permission, the stories of Ami have been an inspiration to many unknown to her.

Sunshine Inspiration: Respect and honor those you love.

"Just tell me what to do!!!!" Ami cried to me, asking me what career pathway she should pursue." I cannot," I said. "You must choose your path. I am here to support you, but you must do the work." As a school counselor, I knew too well that children must choose their own destiny, with guidance, of course. If children do not see relevance ... if they are not empowered to work to achieve to a goal, the likelihood of success is diminished dramatically.

To make a long story short, Ami, elected to become an early childhood education teacher. When Ami announced her desire to attend Penn State, like the good reality-based therapist I was, we discussed what this meant. For starters, it meant taking four years of English, social studies, science, math, and a minimum of two years of foreign language while in high school. Did I mention that taking foreign language was like "cruel and unusual punishment" for Ami or if Ami took a math class, a tutor was hired for her?

The bottom line? Ami had a dream. She made a plan and stuck to it. Ami worked very, very hard. She was determined. She volunteered and worked in early childhood education settings during the summers of her high school years to demonstrate seriousness of purpose in pursuing a career as a teacher. Ultimately, Ami attended Penn State, Altoona for two years and was graduated from Penn State University in four

and one-half years. In the interim, she student taught in England ... with so many desiring to teach elementary school, Ami need to find a way to stand out among the crowd.

Ami is now an outstanding teacher. She also earned her master's degree and is in her eleventh year teaching in Florida. Ami's students, many of whom came to her as non-English speakers, have excelled.

Becoming a teacher was Ami's goal and Ami's dream. She persevered in the face of great adversity to achieve her dream. She drew upon the legacies handed down to her to thrive and to prevail. She did not give up. On several occasions, when Ami felt knocked down by life and set back, she and I would walk across a room together, hand-in-hand, taking two steps forward and one-step back, to represent life's knock down blows. Ultimately, we got across the room together. It just took a little more time.

Sunshine Inspiration: When life knocks you down, stand up ... put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward. You will get there ... it just takes time. And ... If you need too, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Cadence - Wonder

At 17 months old, Cade is filled with wonder. The world is a place of joy and inspiration for her. Already she demonstrates a strong will and an "I can do it myself" attitude. Embodied in Cade are the gifts offered by the generations preceding her. She is the sixth generation known to me. Through Cade, the legacies of Beulah, Anna, Patricia, Ami and I will live.

Cade will carry with her the legacies of the past. Ultimately, she will choose which to accept, which to reject, and which to make her own. Although the path she will travel is unknown, Cade is bolstered by the legacies she carries – determination, grace, intellect, inspiration, perseverance, and wonder – the legacy of six! The world presents a universe of possibilities for Cade and for all of us, no matter what our age.

Sunshine Inspiration: Wonder in the universe of possibilities! Be inspired!

Six Sunshine Sister Strategies

1. **Determination:** Be determined, but be wise. Consider actions and the consequences of actions. Follow your passions. Let good decisions guide you.
2. **Grace:** As you journey through life, live with grace. Support and care for others. Consider how you wish to be viewed in the world and act accordingly.
3. **Intellect:** Demonstrate your abilities. Assess your strengths and use them to your advantage – at home, at work, and in your personal life.
4. **Inspiration:** Be inspired by life and those around you. When inspired, take action, but always act with integrity. Be proud of the "women" you see in the mirror. Be proud of you!
5. **Perseverance:** Be inspired. Set your goal and go for it! Work hard, and never, never, never give up. Do what it takes to make your dream a reality. Do it with determination, grace, and intellect.
6. **Wonder:** Thrive in the world around you. Create positive visions of your future and be grateful for that which you have been given.

Draw upon the gifts offered to you ... the legacies of the past. Bask in the wonder of the world and express gratitude. Survive, thrive, and prevail with dignity and grace over the challenges in the present. Use your intellect and act wisely. Be inspired by the present. Inspire generations to come! Love and be well, my friend!

Sunshine Inspiration: Others will inspire those who strive to inspire. Give the gift of inspiration and it will be returned to you.

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