

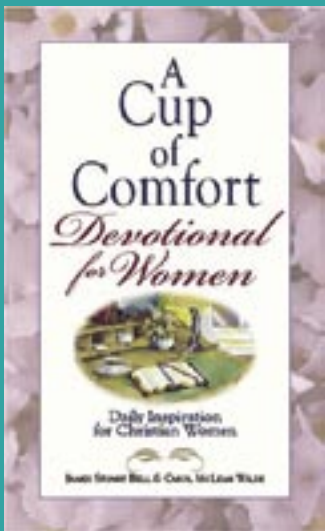
LIFE MOMENTS: THE REFLECTIONS OF MORNINGSIDE ALUMNI ON THE MEANING OF LIFE-LONG LEARNING

LEARNING THE VALUE OF DISCIPLINE

By Carol Guthmiller



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A few of Guthmiller's devotions are featured in this book.

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As we wended our way through small Iowa towns on Highway 20 en route to visit our daughter and her family, old familiar-sounding town names were brought back to my memory: Correctionville, Holstein, Moville, Sac City. I know back in my college years that there were students from these areas, but, not being from Iowa, I never got the town and student connected. Oh, how I wish I knew who came from these towns, as we make this trip quite frequently. We have taken the time, once or twice, to drive past the Morningside College campus and the old Conservatory, where I spent many hours.

To me, the Conservatory and the late Dr. James Wood were one and the same, since he was the head of the music department. He ran a very stern ship; it was all business. We knew we were under the direction of a man who demanded the best from us. Music was serious business, and if you didn't think so, you'd better find something else to do.

My first inclination that he might be human was when our choir stopped in Minneapolis on choir tour to sing for his mother who was dying of cancer. We sang for her, and she said to him, "Oh Jimmy, that was just wonderful!" She gave him a hug. I guess I will never forget that touching moment. This tough task master had a sweet loveable mother who called him "Jimmy." And she was dying.

Besides daily choir rehearsals, every week I would meet with Dr. Wood for a voice lesson.

I did it with fear and trembling because he was attempting to teach me to sing in a way that was foreign to me. He was teaching me to "project the voice" when I had sung all through high school "forcing the voice." In the process of trying to unlearn bad habits, a barrier came between the two of us. I could not understand his concepts, no matter how diligently I tried. After two frustrating years of vocal lessons from Dr. Wood, I chose to try another teacher and dropped the touring choir.

Years rolled by, and I would think of Dr. Wood. After I compiled my first collection of columns, I sent him a copy of my *Prairie Ponderings*, along with an apology, after tracking down his address. He was spending his retirement years in a rural town in Minnesota.

He responded with "I wondered what had melted the snow off my mail box!" He conveniently could not remember any wrong I had done him. He told me of his years growing up on a farm, which was new information to me. Later he sent me copies of poetry he had written, with deep thoughts about life as he saw it. He had lost his singing voice due to an illness. He said that he lost what he thought was his great purpose in life: singing. He had found, however, a "Greater Purpose" following that experience.

Two years later I learned of Dr. Wood's death via *The Morningsider*. I am sure he is singing in heaven, projecting the voice from the diaphragm and focusing it just as it should be focused.

College teaches us many things besides the disciplined routine of the classroom. My experience with Dr. Wood taught me many things I would need later on in life. He taught me discipline, steadfastness, the rewards of hard work and persistence, and, most of all, how the beauty of music touches one's soul. Thank you, Dr. Wood.