**The Influence of our Roots on the People we Become**

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When I was a little kid, I remember asking my Dad about our family tree for a school assignment. My Dad always told us that he thought his family was originally from Wales, but his father was an orphan – so he really did not know for sure. My Dad’s family name – and my maiden name – is Hopkins. According to Ancestry.com, my early American Hopkins relatives from the 1700’s were farm workers and house servants.

My Mom’s family was from Switzerland, with an original family name of Tschudi. My mother’s family name was changed to Judy when they immigrated to the US. Ancestry.com is quite an amazing family tree tool. I have been able to trace the Judy family back to the 1600’s and many, many of them have been teachers. Apparently it is in my genes! My grandfather had a master’s degree in education in the early 1900’s, and my mother was educated as a teacher as well.

However, what I find even more amazing is the effect that one woman can have on her family. When my father was a small child, my paternal grandfather became an asthmatic invalid. My Grandma and Grandpa Hopkins had three sons in the midst of the depression. My grandfather passed away before I was born, and my Grandma had to take over the financial responsibility of my Dad’s family shortly after he was born. My Grandma Hopkins was not a well-educated woman. Like many of my ancestors, she was a house cleaner. However, my Grandma was extraordinary in other extremely important ways. She taught my father and my uncles to be responsible, resilient, and extremely hard-working. All of them had jobs that contributed to the family’s income, and my grandmother expected all of them to go to college. My father ended his career as executive vice-president of a large paper manufacturing and business forms corporation; my uncles ended their careers as a school principal and as a CPA and partner/owner in a successful accounting firm.

When I was a little kid, we had very little money. I had 2 older sisters and 1 younger brother, and for years the only clothes I wore were the ones I received as “hand-me-downs” or the ones my Mom sewed for me. However, like my grandparents, my father and mother always challenged my sisters and brother and me to assume we WOULD go to college, rather than IF we went to college. This had a hugely positive effect on all of us… maybe particularly for me, since in 1972 very few nurses were going to college.

About a year ago, I continued working on Ancestry.com, looking into the Hopkins family history. After some work, I found the census data for my father’s and grandfather’s families. The census data led me to birth and death certificates for my Great-grandfather, Great-grandmother, and my grandfather’s SISTER! I was up ALL NIGHT following these leads… and eventually found the village in Wales from which my father’s family originates, and the village in Ireland from whom my Great-grandmother (his wife) originated. This was such a big piece of my unknown puzzle!

When I look at my own family, we are all a product of these influences. My husband and I always raised our kids with the assumption that they would attend college. We raised them to feel like we had no money, even if we did – and they babysat and worked from the age of 12 on. Now they are both totally self-sufficient and successful in their areas of study. We raised two strong, self-reliant women.

ROOTS have a huge impact on the person one will become….but it only takes ONE, STRONG, DETERMINED PERSON to make a difference in a family. May we all pray to be THAT PERSON for our family!