

IN SEARCH OF BEAUTY by Nancy Cramer

All my life I have searched for beauty. As a child I was surrounded by it but was too young to appreciate the falling leaves making a carpet in my yard; the colors of a rainbow; the black silky ears of my cocker spaniel; and more. It was in my teen years that the concept of beauty became a goal and I tried various cremes and lotions to rid my face of adolescent pimples and brushed my hair 100 strokes every night to make it glossy.

Then in my college years I became acquainted with the beauty of the written word as I studied the old and current masters of writing in English and occasionally in my French literature class. I marveled at the ability of a writer to pen words that made me smile or become teary. That brought back recollections of good times and a few bad ones. Words that expressed my thoughts before I realized they were thoughts. I searched for passages that flowed beautifully, that conjured beautiful pictures in my mind. I sought art books with prints of the Old Masters and others inbetween and since. I worried about my dress, was it appropriate and did it show off my physical attributes.

Then came marriage and pregnancies, four in almost six years. No time to worry about beauty self, as I began to see beauty in the faces of my young children. I saw it in their expressions of wonderment as they discovered a beetle crawling on the ground. "Isn't it pretty, Mom?" they would say, and I would nod my head. Skip forward a dozen or so years, when I was fortunate to make my first trip abroad. The wonders of Europe were shown to me, the ancient cities and buildings, mosaics and paintings in old cathedrals, the carefully cultivated landscape that spoke of work done by generations of hands. This was beauty. So I made trip after trip, sometimes returning to the same country but a different location. I was never disappointed. Even the bleak sands of the Empty Quarter in Saudi Arabia and their vistas were to be relished.

And so I traveled some 60 plus times, building my own encyclopedia and picture book in my memory. I no longer am able to travel, so I draw upon those moments printed indelibly in my mind, still searching for beauty. I find it daily in the silky scarlet of my rose petals and the purple velvet of my petunia blossoms. I see it in the sunset or the rain shower or the unexpected snowfall. Best of all, I see it in yet a recently discovered place- in the faces and smiles of people around me. In their words of "thank you" on the telephone or the "have a safe day" that still sounds genuine to me. How fortunate I am, to be surrounded by beauty I never sought out or recognized. Whoever wrote the words, "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder," pronounced an universal truth, so simple and brief it has escaped my attention most of my years. Now my eyes are opened and I see beauty everywhere. My search is over at last.
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