

Virginia Perkins Healy: Never to Stand in the Setting Sun and Hate Myself for the Things I've Done



Virginia Perkins Healy was born in West Haven, Connecticut, to Virginia Zott Perkins and Edward Francis Perkins. We met her at the Desert Rose Institute in Arizona also, where she works as a volunteer. When we asked her for a recommendation of someone who might be interested in being interviewed for our project, Virginia introduced

us to Audrey Marcus. After some urging, she later consented to be interviewed as well.

Virginia Perkins Healy was born and raised in New England and says she adopted very basic New England values. “I was raised in the Congregational Church, which at the time I did not realize was a very liberal form of Protestantism, so the idea of having a relationship with God, the idea of being of service to other people, has always been important to me, as well as New England thrift. Basic human values.” “Books have always been important to me. I have always done well in school and was at the head of my class, so the ability to think, to read, to solve problems and I think probably from this standpoint, being contented with what one has, are all important. Material things have never been that important to me or having a place in society. I think those are values from my childhood.”

Looking back on her life, the most difficult experience she faced was when she and her husband almost divorced. “I became very ill. I had run a fever, not knowing it was stress. I was running fevers every day. My doctor finally said to me that my husband was very worried about me and he had run all the tests he could. And he said, ‘I’ll make a deal, I will stop running tests if you will stop being sick.’ And I said, ‘O.K.’ and that was the end of the illness. But the problem didn’t go away.”

It wasn’t until a friend invited her to dinner that she found a solution to what was really bothering her. “My friend Wendi showed up at the place where I was working and she invited me to dinner. I almost turned her down, but I thought ‘What the

heck I'll go out to dinner with her. We stayed up all night talking and we became very good friends. At the time, when I needed to hear the words I needed to hear, Wendi said them to me. I was waiting for my husband to move, or make the change that was necessary to save our marriage. And I was the one who needed to make a decision or make a move. And Wendi said the right things at the right time, when I was ready to hear them. And our marriage stayed. At that time we were approaching our 17th anniversary. And we just celebrated our 44th."

Virginia said her faith, prayer and some very close friends are what she draws on for support during hard times. "I look to them for advice, for support to get me through and I try to do the same for them."

When asked if there was any advice she had for young women, Virginia cited a poem by Edgar Guest. "I am going to just paraphrase a little of it," she said, "but it starts out, 'I have to live with myself and so, I want to be fit for myself to know.' And later on it says, 'Never to stand in the setting sun and hate myself for the things I've done.' That's something I read in my youth and it has always stuck with me. Live your life, be true to yourself, know your values, don't sell yourself short, and as a Baha'i, I would add learn to be content under all conditions. I had an English teacher who always said, 'This too shall pass,' and I have found that is very true. Whatever the problem, whatever the trouble, whatever the good time, this too will pass."

Virginia's advice for getting to contentment was this: "I think part of it is prayer, part of it is attitude, part of it is reminding yourself that material things really don't matter. There was a man whose business burned and it was a lumber yard, and he was the chief employer in town. He was elderly and his friends all told him, 'Take the money, don't bother rebuilding.' But he said he wanted to rebuild because he was the chief employer and without his business people wouldn't have jobs. He said, 'So I have all this money; how many suits can I wear at one time? How much food can I eat for one day?' And I think that goes for being contented also. In trying to not be worried about things and in trying to not be upset about things, I find myself saying more and more, several times a day, the prayer, "God sufficeth all things about all things and nothing in the heavens or in the earth save God sufficeth. Verily He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer the Omnipotent." There are so many things we can't control and you need to be contented with what you have."

"The thing that is most meaningful to me is the fact that I have recognized Baha'u'llah. Why? Because we are spiritual beings. That is our reality, not our physicality. And I really believe that when we were in the womb we developed the tools we need for this world – arms, legs, eyes. In this world we need to acquire virtues, character. And those are the things that we work towards. The Baha'i Faith

has given me a great deal, but mainly, it has brought me closer to God, to appreciate people more our differences and our commonality. It has made me see things in a different light.”

“When you are young in some ways everything seems possible and some things don’t seem very important. But as you get older your viewpoint changes and you wish you had the wisdom in youth that you finally acquired through suffering, through trials and tribulations. I would say to any young woman, ‘Go for your dreams. Develop your capacity. You can be much more than you think as long as you don’t let someone else hold you back.’”

Feel at Peace

"I feel really at peace when I can walk through the forest or along the river, along the bank. It is something I have always done, something I have always had a lot of opportunity to do. All of the things in nature we can't explain, I think that God gave them to us for a reason."

—Amanda Simms Donahue

