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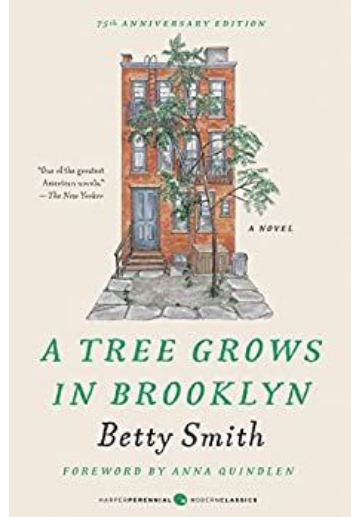
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“A Tree Grows in Brooklyn” – A Symbol of Strength and Resilience

Friday, May 14, 2021



A comment on my blog a while ago referenced this book. It was published in 1943. I never read it as a child but Dad did take me to see the movie.



The photo looks a lot like my house and this passage from the book could have been me.

“An eleven-year-old girl sitting on this fire-escape could imagine that she was living in a tree. That’s what Francie imagined every Saturday afternoon in summer”

Of course, the book is not about botany or landscaping but the resilience of the human spirit.

“a tree which struggles to reach the sky. It grows in boarded-up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps. It grows up out of cellar gratings. It is the only tree that grows out of cement”

The mythical tree finds nourishment and strength where most other plants cannot.

I “grew” in Brooklyn too. I bought this shirt on a visit there for our 50th Wedding anniversary in 2017.

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"Brooklyn – Only the strong survive"

The phrase is meant to be cute and sell shirts, but the message could be true of many places.

The comments on my blog described a wide variety of early life circumstances, some happy, even idyllic, but many that were not at all.

The setting of "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" was the early 1900s. Yet the message echoed in 1940s Brooklyn where not much had changed beyond a different cacophony of languages in the apartment buildings and row houses.

Later as a teenager in the 60s, a song related the same message.

"There is a Rose in Spanish Harlem" (link at end)

That is a section of New York City with a large Latino population and a rich cultural heritage.

This song is about a rose that grows through the concrete in the city, always shaded from the sun. The rose is a metaphor for the girl who thrives in those circumstances just like the girl on the fire escape.

Yesterday I read a blog by Mamadee16 which inspired my thoughts today.



There are many kinds of challenges that we must strive to overcome.

You can read her story here.

www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=6757673

Sadly, not everyone in similar situations does survive let alone thrive.

This past year has provided much time to think about that.

Yet here we all are – "Still Standing"

How DID you or DO YOU STILL find the strength to overcome the challenging circumstances in your life?

Yes, I know many will respond about turning to prayer and a higher power. I do too.

Yet, I always remember my Dad's addition to "God will provide"
He said "God provided us" indicating we should do something to "help God"

Is there anything or anyone in the physical world that helps you find the strength and resilience to keep on going and even thrive in difficult situations?

"There is a Rose in Spanish Harlem"

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgWQMU8H1do

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TOMATOCAFEGAL

Thank you for your blogs. Insight and inspiration to me
7 days ago



DEE797

I grew up on Long Island. I've never read the book or seen the movie but now I'm going to see if I can find the book. Thanks for the link to the song, memories.
10 days ago



BBONET

Thanks for sharing!! I will have to go back and read this book again! I lived in Brooklyn when I was in 3rd grade and my two brothers were born I think at Kings county back in the 60s. So again



thanks for the memories.
17 days ago



ELISEP5

I love this blog. I saved all the chapters on audio from youtube. I want to read/listen to it. I hope to watch the movie when I'm able to find it. Thank you for sharing. Love hearing how people



lived through, survived and flourished in spite of great difficulty.
19 days ago



MTN_KITTEN

Ahhh ... we never know what someone has endure or overcome. We don't all share our stories.



My BFF Sharon was my cornerstone. Yes, Hubby is my champion, supporter and my beloved loving husband.

But Sharon was my ... Sister Friend. With her unexpected passing ... I feel adrift.

I have prevailed over a difficult childhood and difficult patches in life. One decides to pull from within and put one foot in front of the other.



19 days ago



BECCABOO127

I love A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, both the book and the movie! I enjoyed your blog. My family helps to get me through the tough times. I came from a large fam and my siblings (those still alive) are very dear to me.
19 days ago



SAMMILESSACH

I went back..after you commented on my page so many great comments on this blog! Agreed it is amazing to me how we all have different lives,different views,but all brought here together!!!



Thank you to all your commentors!
20 days ago



MARKSMOM3
Well Said! GREAT JOB! I LIKE IT!

20 days ago



MARTHA324
Must have read A Tree Grows in Brooklyn hundreds of times! Love that book and reading it always gives me the incentive to keep moving. Francie and her family had so many obstacles and they found ways around them, with love and grit.

When I think of the challenges I've faced I realize how lucky I've been growing up in a family with all the love and support in the world encouraging me to be successful.....the only challenge was my parents focus on my weight. Oh the stories I could tell! What got me to get over that was finally figuring out that my weight was weighing me down in so many ways and it was my problem, not their problem and I would just start making some small healthy changes. that worked.

OK - one small story. when I was 60 (yes 60!) I was visiting and my father offered to pay me \$10 for every lb I lost between a Labor Day and Christmas....just had to go step on the scale. I declined. Oddly enough a year later I started making the changes to lose weight and my parents both started to show signs of dementia and never even noticed when I finally did lose all the weight.
20 days ago



SUSMANNIE
I read the book when I was young. Love the illustration on the cover. Maybe I should read it again. And the song is classic NYC sixties. Love the T shirt. You wear it well! "Brook a' leen", as my Italian immigrant grandparents referred to it. It was their home before they moved out to Long Island.
20 days ago



SUNNYBEACHGIRL
It amazes me that I was able to get away from where I started, go far and still have to work through the wounds that are still with me. I have two great sisters who also survived we reconnected after being apart for years. It helps to talk with someone else who knows the history. We share love and concern of a damaged sister who still struggles everyday
20 days ago



4EVERDIETER
Keep on sparking! And blogging!
20 days ago



MEADSBAY
I loved that book as a girl...maybe I will reread it.
At 69 I've learned the hard lesson of life... There are good times and there are plenty of difficult times.
I am going through some bad times but I just wait it out until the good times come back.
One day at a time.
My good times for outweigh my bad times, thankfully!



20 days ago



SHAKERATTLEROLL
Well Said! I LIKE IT! miss you!

21 days ago



DBEAU57
When I was a teen, my mom called me over to the bookcase and pulled out one of my dad's books (he died when I was 9). It was "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn". She gave it to me. I treasured it because it had belonged to my dad, but as I grew older, each time I've read it, I've appreciated the story even more.
21 days ago



WHILLSW
Well Said! enjoyed the book many years ago.....
21 days ago



**PATRICIAAK**

'Work on being in love with the person in the mirror who has been through so much but is still standing'.

I would add 'and continues to grow in kindness and love.'

21 days ago

**SUNNYCALIGIRL**

It is prayer and studying my faith--and connecting with other people. Gentle, kind, compassionate people who nurture. Once in a while, I like to believe that in return I mentor or nurture others as well. Thank you for sharing this.

21 days ago

**JUDYD207**

Well Said! KEEP SPARKING!

21 days ago

**WATERMELLEN**

I did read this book when I was a little girl -- never saw the movie -- and absolutely it inspired me. I tried to imagine what kind of tree it was -- decided that it must have been like a Manitoba maple because there were several of these in my childhood neighbourhoods and I loved to climb them!!

That little Francie may have grown up in greater poverty than I did and of course in a much more urban environment: but she experienced so much love and caring. I quite envied her!!!

21 days ago

**AZMOMXTWO**

this is a great blog

21 days ago

**JUNETTA2002**

Thanks for sharing.

21 days ago

**WEDDWT**

Yesterday we had our asphalt driveway seal coated, so the day before I pulled the weeds that popped thru the imperceptible cracks where teeny tiny seeds found openings to enter, sprout, and reach toward the light. Similarly, most humans do the same, right? Instead of assuming "I can't", we stand and look up, towards the Light, and start moving in that direction. When you're in the darkness, and hope is waning, the faintest light is pretty easy to see.



21 days ago

**KITTYHAWK1949**

I have been blessed or lucky not to have very many challenges or at least I don't feel that I did until late in life. My biggest challenge was adopting my younger son (I was in late 50s). A challenge that I don't feel I did very well but after 9 or 10 years he has changed so much. The anger isn't so bad and he doesn't act out like he did and I feel we even have a fairly good relationship now but except for the fact that I lived through it, I'm not sure that I did that much to cause the positive change in him. But on the other hand if I hadn't adopted him and kept him, I doubt he'd have ever changed and most likely would be in lots of trouble. He drove me crazy and I acted crazy a lot of those 9+ years but even crazy, it was a better environment than what he had most of the 9 years before I adopted him.

Loved the song. I remember listening to it a lot in my teens as had it on an album.

21 days ago

**JPPERSELL**

My life hasn't been so easy. Mind you it is getting easier now that I am getting older with my sons grown but I have had a hard time. Been up and down with life. Almost took my life one time. That was a very bad time for me. I am glad that I have come to the realization that life can be good if you look for things to be able to enjoy it. My husband through all of this has been my rock and pillar of strength. We have been married for 32 years and will probably be married for the rest of our lives. That has been something I am very proud of and it keeps me going.

21 days ago

**WALKINTOFIT**

i found my faith in God sitting in a tree out front of the house I grew up in.... loved that tree, spent many hours sitting up in the lofty branches... I still want to b in a tree, but mine aren't big enough to climb yet...

I will c if I can find that book to read.

I had a birthday on the 10th and thought about "Yes I made it to 63 and living takes skill! U got this!

through the grace of God

21 days ago





RACHNACH



21 days ago



BONIFIANT

My faith in a living personal God, my Bible, and the old hymns strengthen me and then there is the support of my husband and family. God is truly faithful.

21 days ago



IOWAGRAMMA

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is one of my all-time favorite books. I re-read it during my pandemic hibernation and remembered again why it was so special to me. I wasn't aware that a movie had been made. Honestly, I don't normally read these "featured" SP blogs because they're always written by the same 3 or 4 people and I like more variety, but your blog today reached out!! Thanks for your comments.

21 days ago



DONNALEE-53



21 days ago



RHOOK20047

Yes through the 44 years of marriage they have been many moments of doubt and worry. But God does always provide even when things look the bleakest. With all the health issues in my family, I believe that more and more even as we are approaching our 45th anniversary. Although there has been speedbumps in life, I am happy that I have made it through with my wife and we weathered every storm together.

21 days ago



KELLIEBEAN

I've always loved that Ben E King song! I will put that book on my list. I remember it but never read it.

What a wonderful blog for me to read on a day when I'm hitting the reset button in many ways and a great reminder to look back at the moments I have worked through this past year to keep standing. You gave me happy tears this morning!



21 days ago



HOLLYM48

You are right, God will provide, but we better be willing to stand up and take the solution God is providing.

There are so many strong people out here in spark world and I have to say one of the gifts God handed me was finding Spark people and deciding to be part of this amazing community. This community uplifts, encourages, teaches, strengthens, and keeps on giving the gift of support and love!

21 days ago



CHERYLHURT

I loved that book as a child.

22 days ago



PLCHAPPELL

Needed this one

22 days ago



ETHELMERZ

Good blog. Gratitude, especially while aging. No fantasy belief, some of it is random good luck.

22 days ago



DESIREE672

Family make me resilient. I think practice makes me resilient too. Lots of alarms over the years. My daughter has moved in with us recently. She reacted yesterday with alarm to two situations. I noticed my reaction honed with practice - behave as if there is nothing alarming. It calms me and it calms those around me. Win-win! Find what's wrong and deal with it. Both were false alarms. It was just interesting that my daughter's reactions made me conscious of a strategy I've developed over the years.

22 days ago





LIS193

Great message!



Well Said!

22 days ago



GREYDOLPHIN

People from Brooklyn must be special. I volunteered at Mote Marine Aquarium when we lived in Florida. My favorite person on my shift was from Brooklyn and very proud of it. She embraced life and had such a positive and determined attitude.



I'm not as positive as she is, but I do have a fierce determination in life that I won't let anything get in my way, can somehow mutter through almost anything, and will help my family and friends.

22 days ago



MARYJEANSL

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is one of my all-time favorite books. I have read and reread it. Beautiful coming of age story. Also a fictionalized version of the author's own life. Unlike Francie, the girl in the story, I had a materially easy life as a child, but I could still relate to some of her emotional hardships, disappointments, struggles, and in the end, achievements in spite of the hardships.



22 days ago



CHERIRIDDELL

You look gorgeous in your teeshirt! I am very resilient. I just keep on. It is best that way!



22 days ago



MSMOSTIMPROVED

Is it as simple as it must be done? My nana was resilient and didn't allow excuses. You roll up your sleeves and get to work no matter how hard the job. We are all so blessed even in times of struggle. She said focus and work harder.



22 days ago



PHEBESS

I don't really know how to explain it - but when something happens that is traumatic, the feisty part of me comes out, and I refuse to let the situation or the other person change who I am. Does that make sense? I work hard to maintain my self-confidence and my control over MY life, no matter whether I'm dealing with some natural disaster like a devastating hurricane, or a personal trauma. I refuse to allow that situation change me. Because then I feel like nature, or someone else, has won. And I won't let them have that power.



22 days ago



RAZZOOZLE

Great blog. I stay standing by living in the moment, appreciating what I have and working toward a better tomorrow when times are tough. I also have my faith, an amazing support system or friends and family and a realistic view of everyday offers new opportunities. Finally, I am too stubborn to give in to defeat.



22 days ago



DOVESEYES

Love the message :) I have a wonderful friend who has been a friend for many years, we gel, we understand each other, we love the Lord, we share a bond that time has only strengthened :)



22 days ago



JAMER123

I don't recall ever reading the book but I know we talked about it a lot. I am sure it brings back new memories every time you read the title or book. I can only imagine. Thanks for sharing. Nice shirt too.



22 days ago



TERMITEMOM

I remember the book so vividly... Perhaps it is time for me to read it again! Thank you.



22 days ago



BKNOCK

I think it is probably my family that has kept me going the most and my Sunday School children.

I sent small gifts to my now 5-year-old cousin throughout the Pandemic because I could not see him much and I wanted him to know how much I love him. He was always so excited and happy to get a new book or a magazine on sharks. Nothing expensive and usually something to learn new things. He is like a sponge.



I also sent my Sunday School kids notes and cards to help them through this time. To let them

know that they are loved. Some of them live in tough situations and not going to school has been hard on them.

My Mom always needs me and my teenager and they have brought me great joy. I am so happy that I have been able to work from home to help my Mom out when she needs it. My teenager and I have gotten closer again,

I am one of the lucky ones because I have kept my job (work my butt off) and none of us have had the virus.

My Mom was also born in Brooklyn in a German area and has shared many stories about growing up.

I always found it interesting because my Aunt always talked about how poor they were and how she hated growing up that way but my Mom was always content and never complained she said that they always had enough food and she was friends with twins and got their hand me downs and was happy to have two of everything. We all have different outlooks on life and I am glad that I am more like my Mom and I can find contentment staying at home. We love to watch our backyard birds!

22 days ago



HAYBURNER1969



I read "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" several years ago (checked it out from the library, as I recall). I might just have to download it to my e-reader now. I have always felt very lucky that I was able to bloom in some pretty nice locations. I often remember my ancestors who were not as fortunate and still managed to thrive. That gives me strength to get through anything that might seem unbearable in my own life. I sometimes think, "Well, I'm not picking coal. That was a lot harder."

22 days ago

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