

A Poke Salad Granny memorialized as life's truest

success Special

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Poets and philosophers tell us one life can touch many, while experts on life span say we can live long through relationships and meaningful activities, all of which were memorialized about a “Poke Salad Granny” original on Monday night.

In August 2010 a blog called [Poke Salad Granny](#), referred to lovingly as PSG, was created as a mechanism of presenting the values of a rural culture, personified by the simplicity of country life and became the embodiment of many of the stories and attitudes of a 98-year-old woman named Rosalie Coutee. This was combined with memories of a similar woman, Clara Diadema Matthews, who died 50 years ago.

The blog contains home-spun stories that include advice, gripes and “the woodshed,” on topics ranging from politics to everyday life. The thesis has been that a grandmother in one’s life is central to how we manifest and transfer love from one generation to another, which then might multiply throughout the world. Five months ago two women met in a downtown Natchitoches café and discussed how this might happen. What happened next involving the life and stories of Rosalie Coutee and Clara Diadema Matthews is what has transformed their values to an ongoing phenomenon that people continue to reach for even after her death.

Rosalie Coutee, whose death occurred on Tuesday at the age of 98 one week ago and was memorialized on Monday, April 25, 2011 at a wake in Natchitoches, Louisiana, lived her whole life in a small town called Cloutierville, Louisiana. The town was originally made famous when [Kate Chopin](#) began to write her memoirs, thoughts and stories about the life of the people in the area, as well as her famous narrative on women’s coming of age, *The Awakening*. The museum, which was the Chopin home, burned down several years ago. As one of the center’s of the town’s attractions, the economic struggle that defines hard-scrabble, Southern towns deepened. Yet the attraction of shared love in that town continued, represented by the extended Creole families that predominate the area. The two women who sat together five months ago at a Natchitoches café dreamed how that love attraction might be shared.

These two women are a writer and businesswoman, the businesswoman who is the granddaughter of Rosalie Coutee, whose wake was Monday night. The life and stories of Rosalie Coutee became part of what developed as a blog, called Poke Salad Granny. A Facebook page and Twitter account were set up a few months later. In less than six months it became a growing phenomenon with hundreds of new “friends” and numbers of people who wrote for advice and asked to be part of the “family.”

Grandma Coutee’s life became of interest to such notables as Karl Rove, who became one of her first Twitter followers, and the Cato Institute as well. Those attracted to her message have ranged from the



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The values and love of Creole culture, as well of a simple life, was recognized in Natchitoches last night at a memorial in recognition of Rosalie Coutee, who died at the age of 98.

most conservative to the most liberal, from agnostics to born-again Christians and people of many faiths. That's because universal love was the message taught by the life of a woman who lived and died humbly, but whose stories and style are the things many people say they cherish most. Even those people who are famous seem to put aside their grievances when they interact and share in the context of Poke Salad Granny, whose model has been Grandma Coutee and another rural grandmother who died 50 years ago.

That life of Grandma Coutee is represented by children she raised and the many descendants who carry on her traditions as well as numbers of people who visit her blog daily. She was a woman who worked in the fields of Louisiana doing hard, physical labor. She picked pecans in her 80's, continuing to work as she advanced in age. 36 grandchildren, 86 great-grandchildren and numbers of great-great and great-great-great grandchildren, still being counted, are her physical, living legacy. Her real legacy, however, has yet to be measured as her stories will continue beyond her death. Even the President of the United States, Barack Obama, recognized her long life and family achievements in a message that was part of a table memorial. She had rejoiced at living long enough to see the first man of color elected President.



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A letter from the first multicultural (African American) President of the United States to Rosalie Coutee, who died at the age of 98.

The comedian, [Joan Rivers](#), said at Elizabeth Taylor's death that the famous movie star had died rich, surrounded by her family, and remembered by many, a testimony to greatness that provoked the comedian to remark, "Sign me up.! Rosalie Coutee met similar criteria of greatness as her family

surrounds her and she is remembered by growing multitudes of people. She did not, however, die with material wealth, yet the evidence from the outpouring of sentiment from people who came from many parts of Louisiana and who wrote condolences letters to the blog, testify to that material success as having little consequence in their memories. Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of the martyred President John F. Kennedy, once said regarding what is relevant in life and what success means in a woman's life if she is a mother, is being successful in the raising of her children, something represented by many other [inspirational quotes](#).



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Descendants of Rosalie Coutee outside the funeral home where a wake was observed

Grandma Coutee's stories and her attitudes have been encapsulated in the ongoing stories and essays that remain on the Internet. A ghostwriter, interacting with her, had the benefit of years ago a rural grandmother with similar attitudes and values. The granddaughter is one of the living monuments to her grandmother's life, that mix of wisdom personified by a successful business and statements like these: "She is my granny. She deserves to be remembered. Her ways are not just the ways of our family, but she had a message for everyone that shared over and over again can continue to make a difference."

Creoles represent the multicultural aspect of Louisiana that helps to define its customs and traditions. These people, set aside by laws and practice of racial estrangement, nevertheless brought a distinct culture defined by traditions of Catholic faith and love of family in the area of Louisiana in which the

town of Cloutierville is a well-known representation. These are some of the traditions experts say have been lost in a modern life that stresses material success over values-oriented achievements. But in the life of a woman well-loved by many people, from Russia and the Ukraine to the small islands of the Pacific, beyond her extended family, folks say they have found a reminder of the value of a simple and loving life.

The granddaughter once said, “We may be different but our difference is a good one. We represent the love and strength of family and the ability to overcome racial prejudices to define ourselves distinctively. My Granny was a strong, determined woman with a great heart.”

Indeed, for a growing number of people, a number that continues days after her physical death, Rosalie Coutee continues to represent a special attraction and fills a special need. Four new Twitter followers were signed this morning and 47 readers had read her blog in the period of less than an hour.