

Amy Vanderbilt's Nightmare

By Linda S. Thompson



Some of us are old enough to remember Amy Vanderbilt's *Complete Book of Etiquette*, first published in 1952. Ms. Vanderbilt left this world in 1974, but if she were alive today, I wonder what she would think of what is now considered appropriate and/or acceptable.

Amy popped into my head last week when I received an email from a friend that said (and I'm quoting):

"This morning at 6 am I went to the store to get some coffee. I could not get in the front door, as it was blocked by a young girl sitting on the sidewalk talking on her cell phone.

I stood in line because a young girl behind the counter had to finish her conversation on her cell phone before she could understand that she was there to work.

I tried to pull out of the parking lot, but the entrance was blocked by a young girl standing right in the middle of the road, talking on her cell phone, oblivious to the fact that I was sitting there waiting to pull out. I had to blow the horn to get her to move.

Perhaps it is not a generation gap. Perhaps it is just that young people are attracted to metal objects with buttons that beep. I dunno (sic)."

What's happened to good manners?

After laughing for several minutes, I regained my senses and began thinking about this scenario. How far we've come from the days when the young respected their elders (my friend is a Boomer guy). Way back then, we would automatically and politely defer to them in whatever way they could.

Granted, this deference came to a screeching halt when the Boomers arrived. After all, we had all the answers, and could find absolutely nothing we wanted to emulate from our elders. However, being polite in public didn't go by the wayside for quite some time after we entered young adulthood.

Cause and effect

Perhaps today's youthful cell phone users are so caught up with the "now" of what they're doing that they fail to recognize others are patiently (or not so patiently) waiting for them to complete their calls and either do something, or get the %#&& out of the way.

Perhaps it's because they've not been taught what polite society is; the meaning of the phrase "good manners." After all, the youth of today have been brought up to believe they can do no wrong. Everyone gets a gold star; everyone wins a prize.

Our responsibility

Are we really doing our young any favors by promoting this attitude? Or are we setting them up for future disappointments and potential failure? When they enter the workforce and find that they are not always going to come out on top, what happens to them then? If some parents have abdicated their responsibility to instill the concept of good manners in their children, isn't it up to us (society in general)? We need to take this group of young people in hand and teach them that good manners is not a thing of the past, but something that is expected if they have any desire at all for success in life.

Why do I say it's a societal issue? The youth of today are going to be in charge of our destiny one day and if we don't teach them to respect their elders, what are our lives going to be like when they're in charge?

Something to think about, Boomers and Xers . . .

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