

Sayings from the House of Milt and Irma

That is, Milt and Irma Maidenberg from the Line of David. Collected over the years by their children Toby, Mike and Reed.

Milt would say:

- Everything in moderation.
- Do it now!
- Put it back in the place you got it.
- We eat to live, not live to eat.
- The highways are full of idiots.
- Stand up straight.
- Give me the number just in case.
- Don't give me that fishy handshake.
- If you weren't as old as you are, you'd be dead.
- Too soon old, too late smart.
- There are three stages of life: youth, middle age and "You're looking good."

Milt liked these verses:

Time by minutes slips away,
First the hour, then the day.
Small the daily loss appears,
Yet it soon amounts to years.

[Attributed to Ronald Tierney. Milt saw it engraved in the Indianapolis Public Library.]

Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been."

[John Greenleaf Whittier]

Irma would say:

- You can get more flies with honey than vinegar.

- You could ride a horse and buggy on your lower lip.
- Keep your options open.

Irma liked these verses:

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
 Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all they Tears wash out a Word of it.

[From "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám". She owned a beautiful first edition of this work.]

"I love you, Mother," said little Nell;
 "I love you better than tongue can tell...
 "I love you, Mother," said little Fan;
 "Today I'll help you all I can..."

[Irma liked to use these counterpoint rhymes to needle her children. The whole poem is called "Which Loved Her Best?" Author anonymous.]

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,
 There are thousands to prophesy failure;
 There are thousands to point out to you, one by one,
 The dangers that wait to assail you.
 But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
 Just take off your coat and go to it;
 Just start to sing as you tackle the thing
 That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

[From "It Couldn't Be Done" by Edgar Guest, a popular 20th century poet who was called "The People's Poet." Mike was encouraged to memorize this.]

Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
 A medley of extemporanea;
 And love is a thing that can never go wrong;
 And I am Marie of Romania.

["Comment" by Dorothy Parker.]

In youth, it was a way I had
To do my best to please,
And change, with every passing lad,
To suit his theories.

But now I know the things I know,
And do the things I do;
And if you do not like me so,
To hell, my love, with you!
["Indian Summer" by Dorothy Parker.]

The sweet things in life to you were just loaned,
So how can you lose what you've never owned?
Life is just a bowl of cherries,
So live and laugh at it all!
["Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries," music by Ray Henderson, lyrics by Buddy DeSylva
and Lew Brown, 1931]

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
[Irma said this portrayed her feelings about death. She forcefully wrote out the verse as
an instruction for her family. The poem is by Mary Elizabeth Frye. Irma's grandchildren
recited the full version stanza by stanza at her memorial service.]

Other sayings in the family lexicon that Mike and Kitty have taken as their own:

- First thought, best thought.
- When in doubt, throw it out.
- Throw it in the coulee. (Grand Forks-speak for "It's outta here" or "What a piece of junk")
- Do it right the first time.
- Keep moving toward your destination.
- If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there.

- The closer to the airport, the lower your IQ. By the time you're going through security it 's down to 40.
- Everyone's thin in the nursing home.
- No one ever said on his death bed, "I wish I spent more time in the office."
- If the dog eats it, it's dog food; if not, it's research.
- It's not pretty for nice, but it's hell for strong (Joe Schaeffer's home repair mantra).
- Don't mistake a clear vision for a short distance.
- Regret not what you did, but what you didn't do.