

## Speech: Burn The Pink Candle

*A speech by Geneva Anderson (May 16, 2015)*

***Winner, Toastmasters District 58 (South Carolina) Speech Contest. This speech is special to me. It's one of the most meaningful messages I've heard. Partly because the speaker was a fellow club-member, friend, and competitor. And partly because I know it was genuine and heartfelt. Geneva has since passed but she and her message are unforgettable...***

*I would have burned the pink candle-  
Sculpted like a rose-  
Before it melted in storage.  
So wrote American humorist Erma Bombeck  
Shortly before her death  
In a now famous newspaper column entitled-  
If I Had My Life to Live Over.  
Erma's words gripped my soul  
As I was reminded of my own "pink candle" experience.*

*Two pink, beeswax candles came to me as a gift -  
A gift made special because of the giver-  
Mary Gaston Stollenwerck Jones-  
Consummate southern belle  
And wife of the founder of my Alma Mater.  
I had never seen such exquisite candles-  
They looked so delicate-so expensive.  
After thanking her profusely-  
I said what even you might have said-  
Mrs. Jones, these are so beautiful!  
I will have to save them for a special occasion.  
Several years later  
While going through my attic*

I found those pink beeswax candles-  
Crumbled like crackers for soup.

Lena Sinclair-  
A former employer-  
Wore beautiful clothes.  
When forced-  
She would buy a new dress-  
But let it hang in her closet  
Sometimes a year or more  
Before she would wear it .

When I bought this outfit  
I tried to wear it home from the store!

If you complimented Lena  
On a dress she was wearing for the first time  
She would respond  
*Oh, this old thing?*  
When Lena died  
They found several never-worn dresses-  
Hanging in her closet.

This story circulates on the Internet from time to time  
But it is true and illustrates my point perfectly.  
*Los Angeles Times* columnist Ann Wells watched  
As her brother-in-law  
Opened a tissue-wrapped package  
To reveal a gorgeous lady's slip.  
One look at the price tag  
Revealed this was no ordinary slip-  
This was lingerie!  
*Jan bought this the first time we went to New York*  
*At least eight or nine years ago.*  
*She never wore it-*  
*She was saving it for a special occasion.*  
*Well - I guess this is the occasion.*  
He carefully laid the slip on the bed  
Along with the other things  
He was taking to the mortuary.  
With tears streaming he cried-

*Don't ever save anything for a special occasion.  
Every day you're alive is a special occasion.*

In retrospect  
I should have burned those pink candles that very evening.  
Perhaps today  
My adult children would be saying-  
*Mom, do you remember  
When Mrs. Jones gave you those pink candles?  
Their special glow made our hamburger seem like prime rib.  
What a memory I would have created.*

**Why do we feel compelled  
To save the beautiful things  
That come into our lives?**

How easy it is to value things and use people-  
When the more worthy goal should be-  
To value people and use things.  
Even financial guru Suze Orman says  
*People first.*

At Sunday dinner  
I served fresh strawberries-  
Mounded with whipped cream-  
In my antique, etched-crystal dessert dishes  
To my two-year-old granddaughter.  
Her mother spontaneously observed  
*Emma Grace  
Your grandmother must love you an awful lot  
To let you eat from her special crystal.*  
And my heart resounded-YES!  
That is exactly the message  
I wanted my granddaughter to understand.

I searched years for beeswax candles  
Pink ones specifically  
They are not easy to find.  
As candles go  
Beeswax candles are quite expensive.

But YOU deserve my very best.  
Today we celebrate achievement.  
Each of us earned the privilege of speaking on this stage.  
Therefore, in honor of my worthy competitors-  
And in celebration of dreams realized-  
Let's burn the pink candle!  
[Lights a pink candle.]

578 words

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Brian Woolf's comments: This was the speech Geneva planned to deliver at that year's WCPS, if she has won her Semifinal. Unfortunately, that dream did not materialize. But fortunately, we now share Geneva's simple message with its powerful point: Don't ever save anything for a special occasion - for every day you're alive is a special occasion.*

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