

The Peach Shower Curtain

The sanctuary was squarish and tall, furnished in blond wood with soft blue carpet and pews. Above the choir, to the far left, loomed a giant curtain, floor to ceiling, brocaded in a luminous shade of... peach. Yes, peach. Bright... peach. This massive veil had been designed to conceal the baptistry when not in use; but the gaudy hue drew your eye immediately to its curving expanse.

Assuming it had probably been donated by some powerful or wealthy member, I restrained myself from asking anyone about the “peach shower curtain”, as my wife lovingly named it. Eventually, I learned that a certain Sister Zelda had given it years ago, and it would likely stay there for a long time. I was sure I heard the mooing of a Very Sacred Cow; so I steered clear of both the curtain and Sister Z.

Late in her life she became housebound; I paid her a visit. To my great surprise, she was a delightful woman, quiet but with a fine sense of humor. Humble, no hidden agendas, no retractable horns, just one sweet LOL, which in 1978 meant “little old lady”. In fact, she had a great sense of humor. Zelda was a real kick!

Five hundred people packed the sanctuary at her funeral. I looked out, from my vantage point at the piano, over a sea of faces, red and yellow, black and white – all strangers to me! Many of them were plainly from the lower-income bracket. These were the people with whom Zelda had shared her time, her substance, and her love of Jesus. Testimony after testimony revealed her to be a one-woman missionary outreach whose efforts dwarfed all else our church had to offer.

At the time, I was still a fairly new Christian, still new enough to read the Bible’s plain text, still new enough to see ministry simply as serving others as Jesus did. Later I would grow to be more more professional and learn how to cultivate the *appearance* of servanthood, without all the bother and trouble of actually serving. I’ve had to purge

myself many times of that play-acting spirit!

A zero in the eyes of her peers, yet a heroine in the kingdom of heaven! Zelda helped me see “which end is up.” She was a true leader, a Patton in the army of the Lord. She did precisely what leaders are supposed to be doing - getting others to go in the right direction.

Oh, yes! Perhaps you’d like to know about the shower curtain. *She didn’t like it either!* She donated the money, but someone else had been assigned to choose the color and type of fabric. Zelda was too sweet to embarrass her friend over a bad choice, so she just kept quiet.

Can we do as well?