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Arthur Capper: Advocate for Life

“Treat others the way you want to be treated” is a phrase that I’ve often been told throughout my childhood; it’s something that small children hear, try to understand and put into practice. By the fruits of Arthur Capper’s work, he undoubtedly understood and took to heart the vital importance of this principle. Born in Garnett, Kansas, he was working for journalists and newspapers by age fourteen and was known to be responsible and industrious, already setting an example for the young people around him. Following his high school graduation in the year 1884, Arthur chose to pursue journalism and worked diligently in this field, becoming both an editor and legislative reporter before his marriage to Florence Crawford - whom Florence, Kansas is named after - in 1892. He was already a decently successful man, though he was only twenty-seven.

Yet this still was not enough for the overachieving Arthur Capper. To further his career, he moved to Washington D.C. and continued his profession as a congressional correspondent. Upon his return from the east coast, Arthur managed multiple newspaper companies and radio stations, including WIBW, one of the very first in Kansas; his newspapers, particularly *Daily Capital*, were highly acclaimed as he progressed in society and fame. After running for governor of Kansas twice, Capper won, becoming the first native Kansan to take governorship of Kansas. With this authority now in his hands, he continued to make positive changes in the Sunflower State during the course of the two terms he served from 1915 to 1919; succeeding his time as governor, he became a United States Senator. A constant supporter of education and agriculture, he also persisted in developing programs and opportunities for children, whom he knew were the future leaders of society. As a natural-born leader himself, he understood how critical it was to give young people the chance to be honest and responsible, and acted generously upon these beliefs. This eventually fuelled the idea of 4-H clubs and led to their institution. “It is our duty to see that our future citizens are well born,” he said, “And are reared in the environment most likely to develop in them their full capacity and powers.”

In 1920, Arthur Capper went on to institute the Capper Foundation to assist disabled children, which still operates today and supports handicapped people of all ages and needs. In addition, he also founded the Goodfellows Club of Topeka to support families in need of financial support. These foundations highlight just how generously devoted Capper was to the task of enhancing society’s respect for the dignity of the human person. He recognized that people of all abilities - young and old, rich or poor - have the right to *live*, and not just exist; they have the right to live purposefully and with equality. He knew that they deserve to be supported, loved, and benefitted just as much as anyone else. Life is a gift, something to be utilized and appreciated to the fullest, and Capper not only endeavored to accomplish this himself, but also chose to help the members of his community to do so as well, no matter their state of life.

Arthur Capper is an inspiration to me because, in a world that is so cold and full of death, it is of the utmost importance for us to appreciate, promote, and love life, and he did just that. Love is the driving force of all things good in the world, and it is up to us to spread good, not just for our own sake, but also for the sake of others. Capper understood the importance of a life well lived, and everything he did was a testament of this tenet as he charitably used his business success to help others. I want to become the selfless person that Arthur Capper was; I want to put others before myself and let them know that they matter. He strove - as every good

Kansan should - to reach for the stars, to reach for what might seem to be the impossible, even through difficulty.

May we always strive to do the same.

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