

Stunningly HOW TO BE Beautiful



UNDER 21

by Jim Auer
illustrations by christina

A certain national magazine (if you know which one, fine; if not, I'm not telling) publishes an issue each year featuring "the fifty most beautiful people" in the country.

Chances are, I won't be featured this year—or any year. Don't laugh too hard. Chances are, neither will you.

"Heavy" (his real name is Arthur), who owns a restaurant in a part of Cincinnati called the West End (it's definitely not where the rich people live or gather), won't make the list of the fifty most beautiful people either.

But he should. Did you know that there are at least two hundred thirteen varieties of products to make your face beautiful? And that does *not* include makeup! Two hundred thirteen is the number I counted in Aisle 5-B of a large discount drugstore this morning. A bigger store may carry even more. Toners, astringents, moisturizers, deep-pore cleansers, therapeutic lotions, cleansing gels, facial masks and scrubs, and an army of oil, acne, and blemish fighters...you get the idea.

Now remember that these products are designed just to make an unpainted *face* beautiful. They did not include all-purpose skin lotions, makeup of



• *Beautiful people are peace-makers.* Which makes sense, of course...because peace is beautiful and war is ugly. They hurt when they see someone harming someone else. They ache when they see people attacking one another, whether the weapons are knives, fists, words, accusations, gestures, facial expressions, or deliberate ignoring.

They try to bring people back together, even when they sometimes get hurt in the attempt. They don't take sides, but they're not afraid to say firmly that a particular action is wrong.

• *Beautiful people see and appreciate beauty.* They're amazed at the variety of colors, shapes, and textures of flowers. They watch a puppy romping around a yard or hear toddlers giggling, and they connect these things with the joy that God placed in being alive. They see one kind of beauty in the smooth, glowing skin of the newborn and another in the dry, wrinkled skin of the aged. Like Jesus, they see the hurting beauty even in the sinner who wants to

stop messing up but hasn't yet found or accepted the strength to do so.

• *Beautiful people forgive.* When someone hurts them, they suffer just like anybody else. But they don't cling to their anger, seek revenge ("They started it"), or try to put others in their place and make them pay for the wrong that was done.

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Beautiful people know that joy, peace, and growth come with simple forgiveness (which is not the same as allowing oneself to be victimized repeatedly). They know that continued outrage and fuming and

soaking in emotional vinegar only make their lives unsettled and unhappy.

• *Beautiful people have something called "character."* That's difficult to define. *Webster's New World Dictionary* lists sixteen definitions of *character* used as a noun.

Number 8 says "moral strength; self-discipline, fortitude, etc."

"Moral strength" means that doing the right thing is more

important than anything that might be gained from violating or ignoring the right thing. People with character operate that way even when it isn't easy, even when they take heat for it, even when it means doing without something they would like to have.

"Self-discipline" means that you continue to do the right thing even when it looks like the people or the forces on the other side are bigger and badder than you are. It means that you keep doing the right thing even when you begin to wonder whether you have the strength to

continue doing so. People with character operate that way.

There's good reason for the "etc." in Webster's definition number 8 of *character*. Character includes those items listed and much more. I personally would add "not being like Silly Putty."

Silly Putty is a wonderful thing, great fun. If you don't have any, you should invest in some—along with a jar of bubble fluid—and relive part of your childhood.

Remember how Silly Putty eventually takes the shape of whatever container you store it in? Well, that's fine for Silly Putty, but not for people. Silly Putty people sooner or later brainlessly take the shape of (go along with, think like, act like) whatever group of people they're with.

People of character decide if and to what extent they want to be like the environment they're in, and they take their own shape based on what they know to be right.

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A full menu

I promised to tell you about Heavy, who definitely

should make the list of beautiful people.

His real name is Arthur. "Heavy" comes from his size; he weighs around three hundred wonderfully black African-American pounds. You can't weigh spirit, but if you could, I don't think there's a scale large enough to handle the task of gauging Heavy's spirit.

He's been in the restaurant business more than four decades. He owns the place ("Heavy's

Place”), cooks the food, frequently serves it, and does a lot of the cleaning up. The menu at Heavy’s Place features dishes you won’t find at most restaurants. But the food is only part of it. Heavy serves about as much help and hope as he serves food.

If you can pay for your meal, or even part of it, you’re expected to do so. But if you’re down to your last fifty cents (people in Heavy’s neighborhood sometimes are), you’ll get a full meal at Heavy’s. He’ll put your name at the top of a page in an old notebook and record the price of the meal. You don’t sign anything.

You’re expected to repay the debt...when you can. Heavy doesn’t count the days until then or figure interest on the loan, because there isn’t any.

People who are now adults in the West End remember being able to go to school with paper and pencils and decent clothes

because of loans that Heavy made.

At sixty-six, most people are retired or considering retirement soon, especially if they have health problems. At sixty-six, Heavy puts in enough hours every day to equal two workdays or more, Monday through

Saturday.

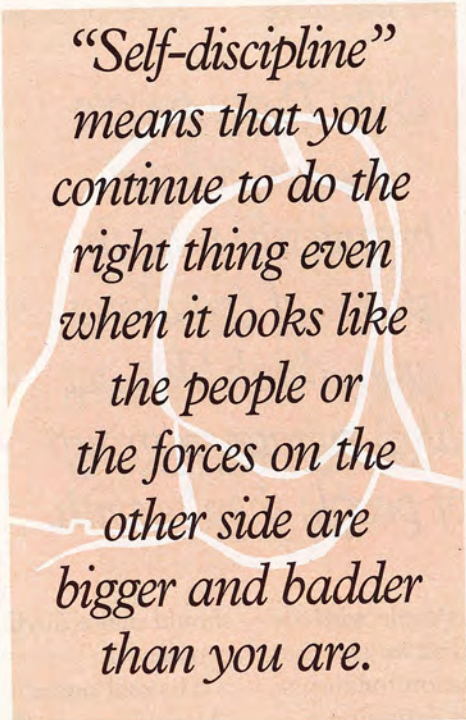
He comes to work for one reason: to make people happy.

He wants to make money for one reason: to give it away.

If that’s not a beautiful person, well—as Bobby Goldsboro sang three decades ago—“then God didn’t make little

green apples / and it don’t snow in Minneapolis when the winter comes.”

Thank God for the beautiful people in your life. Ask God for directions on how you can become one for others. ▼



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