Andy Griffith’s passing marked the end of an era characterized by wholesome writing and quality television programming. *The Andy Griffith Show* proved a writer could weave a story that captivated viewers’ imaginations without resorting to the smoke-and-mirrors sex and violence that permeates today’s entertainment and literature.

Andy’s death aroused some level of emotion in almost everyone. We all have our favorite Mayberry moments and characters. Beyond this, his impact on American culture is unrivaled in the entertainment industry.

Consider the parallels of what Andy Griffith taught us through his show and life—and how we can apply these lessons to our lives and work.

**Establish Boundaries**

Although Griffith starred in a variety of roles, among them a curmudgeon attorney in *Matlock* and a few “bad guys,” he was mindful of the morals and standards he represented. To an extent, he set his career priorities accordingly. Consider this quote from a 2008 interview with the *Virginian-Pilot*:

He [Griffith] mused that he’d passed on the role of the foul-mouthed grandfather in “Little Miss Sunshine,” the part that brought the supporting-actor Oscar to Alan Arkin last year. “I wouldn’t say I was offered it or anything like that, but it was sent to me, and I read it, and I said, ‘Nah, I couldn’t ever go back and do a gospel album after I played that part.’”

As a Christian, I appreciate his need for boundaries which, if crossed, could potentially unravel the work he deemed most important. Gospel music undoubtedly topped his list.
Lessons from Mayberry by Laura Hodges Poole

Authenticity Matters

Andy Griffith once remarked about the importance of authenticity in characters and setting. Though filmed in the 1960’s, the era’s tumultuous world events did not permeate Mayberry. The show wasn’t used as a political vehicle or soapbox. Instead, Mayberry was an escape to simpler times. Griffith learned in the first season to yield to Don Knotts’ character Barney Fife. In doing so, he explained, his own character was less cornball and the show had real humor.

Perhaps this is why after fifty years, The Andy Griffith Show is still as popular as ever. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say the show airs somewhere in the U.S. round-the-clock, 365 days a year.

No matter where you are and what work you’re doing—do so with God’s guidance, and stay true to character. It will be apparent if you try anything other than authenticity.

Remain True to Your Roots

My family and I visited Andy’s hometown of Mount Airy, NC, twice when we lived in North Carolina. We enjoyed walking down Main Street, visiting Floyd’s barber shop (still in business) and the soda fountain in the drug store, eating grilled cheese sandwiches at the diner, and taking in a radio show at the local movie theater.

Mount Airy hosts Mayberry Days each fall where many of the former TV stars return. The actress who played Thelma Lou on the show moved there after becoming disillusioned with the Hollywood lifestyle. Andy lived most of his life in North Carolina, mostly in the Outer Banks. A few hours after his death, he was buried on his farm on Roanoke Island.

If you’re an artist or writer, where and when was your creativity born? Even if you’re not a creative person, maybe your work feels lifeless. When you lack motivation or creativity, explore the origins of your work. Ask yourself, what led you into the work you are doing?

Good Work Stands the Test of Time

The ’70s saw a closure of “rural” television shows and the birth of political activism shows like All in the Family and M.A.S.H. Andy, Barney, Opie, Aunt Bee, Floyd, and Gomer, however, couldn’t be replaced. What they represent—simple times, honest friends, good triumphing over evil—is what repeatedly beckons us back to Mayberry, despite the fact we’ve seen the episodes so many times we can quote them verbatim. They reinforce that character matters in all we do.

Andy Griffith played dozens of roles in his acting career, not all of which were admirable. He struck gold when he created Sheriff Andy Taylor. “I guess you could say I created Andy Taylor,” he said. “Andy Taylor’s the best part of my mind. The best part of me” (Associated Press).

If we’d had the opportunity to sit on the porch with Andy, he might’ve shared similar advice. But, maybe in a way, he does each time we return to Mayberry. I think we’ll all cherish the lessons learned through The Andy Griffith Show and Andy’s career.

Godspeed, Ang. Thanks for the memories.

Laura Hodges Poole is a freelance writer with three dozen articles, devotions, and short stories in publication. She writes Christian romance novels and is a 2012 RWA Emily finalist, placing second amongst a nationwide field of Christian and secular entries. Laura is also an Associate Editor with Christian Devotions ministry. She lives in South Carolina with her husband, and they have two children. Her passion is encouraging others in their Christian walk through her blog, “A Word of Encouragement,” at http://laurahodgespoole.blogspot.com.