The Farmer and the Pumpkin

Earl Nightingale (1921 – 1989) grew up in Tent City, part of Los Angeles, where his mother moved the family after being abandoned by his father. When he was 17, he joined the United States Marines.

He was aboard the *USS Arizona* during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and was one of 12 surviving Marines on the ship that day. He was more fortunate than his shipmates. When the *USS Arizona* was bombed on Dec. 7, 1941, she exploded and sank, killing 1,177 officers and crewmen. The wreck still lies at the bottom of Pearl Harbor.

Perhaps it was out of some of those life experiences that Nightingale started a radio career, eventually becoming an author and a motivational speaker. One of his favorite stories was this one:

Once upon a time a farmer planted a crop of pumpkins. Walking through his field when the pumpkins were just beginning to develop, he came across a glass jug, which, apparently, a passing motorist had thrown into his field.

As an experiment, the farmer poked a very small pumpkin through the mouth of the jug, being careful not to damage the vine.

Months later, when the field was fully developed and about ready for harvesting, the farmer – making one of his periodic inspections – again came across the glass jug. This time, it was completely filled with the pumpkin he had put inside.

The other pumpkins on the same vine were large and fully developed, but the pumpkin in the jug had not been able to grow beyond the confines of the glass prison, and was shaped to its exact dimensions.

The question begging to be asked in response to Nightingale's story is: What size and kind of jug are you going to poke yourself into, or allow someone else to poke you into?

Are you being held back or kept from fully developing because of missed educational opportunities, expectations of others (including friends or family), a desire to be average (or like everybody else), or a failure to seize career advancement opportunities?

We can encounter many glass jugs, but it's what we do about them that matters.

– Beecher Hunter