

*May Your
Home Be
Blessed This
Holiday Season.*

*Here's Hoping
Yours is Filled
With Joy. Our Very
Best Wishes to All
This Holiday Season.*

FROM ALL OF US AT

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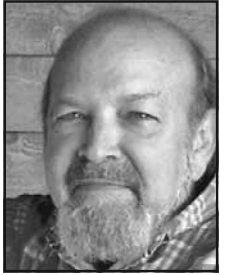
Inquiries Call
815-225-7368
or 815-225-7334



Did You Know . . .

When King George III surrendered to the United States, he did so with each of the individual states because each state was considered a separate country. How times have changed. The Federation that was subject to the states and was created for their benefit in trade, defense and twelve other reasons, had nothing to do with the citizens of those states. People referred to their state as "my country." The states individually agreed with basic unalienable rights and they are included in each state's constitution.

Bob Herman, LCSW What's On Your Mind?



The Forgotten Gifts

By Bob Herman

In my previous article I tried to look at *why* some gifts we give our children fail completely while other gifts enrich their lives profoundly. The gifts still not mentioned are the "forgotten" gifts – the *most* precious ever given. These gifts come in extremely tiny packages with no card attached. The recipient never sends a thank you note (or even say "thanks", unless, maybe, years later). Most recipients don't even notice these gifts, let alone value them. Ya' give up? Well, let me tell you about Fannie (a former client of mine in her eighties) because it was Fannie who helped me recognize and treasure the gifts about which I now write.

Fannie (not her real name) came to my office off-and-on for many years. She told me in amazingly rich detail about her life from early childhood to the present day – fully eighty years of remarkably detailed memories, including names, dates, dialogue, what she wore on each occasion, etc. So for someone like myself, who sometimes can't recall what he had for dinner yesterday, Fannie's memory was *astounding* ... and I was awed and envious. Sadly, however, 95% of what Fannie remembered was painful. Her "blessing" – her tenacious, steel-trap memory – was also, in fact, a curse. The more she remembered, the more empty her life felt to her. Her parents had been handicapped in so many ways: at a young age they had been cut off from their parents in Europe by the Second World War and had watched helplessly as all their relatives died. As immigrants alone in the U.S., they lived lives of fear, humiliation and extreme poverty, never able to fulfill their personal potential. Just *surviving* was a full-time task. Fannie had no memories of parental warmth or affection from her depressed parents during childhood, no memories of Birthday parties, no happy

holiday celebrations, no toys, no outings, no family fun – almost *nothing* happy! She remembered, instead, a mother chronically on the brink of an emotional breakdown and an out-of-control father who, in his frustration, abused Fannie.

Hour after hour I heard about the loneliness, the sadness, the emptiness, the impoverishment and the emotional and physical deprivation of her life. That was what she *needed* me to understand about her life so that I'd understand why she was *still* empty! But there was something wrong with this picture because this very bright woman, with her Olympic-class memory, her appreciation of good novels, her deep resonance to music, her ever-surprising sense of humor, her astonishing ability to intuit what made *others* tick, etc. – well, she just didn't look very "empty" to me. Yes, I *believed* that her parents had truly been *unable* to give her *anything* in her childhood. Yet, she seemed filled with "gifts". In a session she would just *mention* feeling peaceful at the beauty of the sunrise that morning or confess to a moment of *instinctively* knowing what she needed to do to help her granddaughter in a pinch. How could I explain all this coming from an "empty" person? One day, I said, "Fannie, your parents never gave you a gift in a box, and maybe they never gave you even the gifts of their warmth and comfort and appreciation, but they sure did give you some priceless gifts! She was puzzled.

Fannie's story leads me to think about those priceless gifts we *all* receive, willy-nilly, as infants: our *uniqueness*, flowing magically from our genes, and our vast *internal resources* yet to be revealed and which will enrich our lives immeasurably. Do we value those gifts in our children? If we do not, can they come to recognize, treasure and utilize them? And what can we do to help them find these gifts? We might be talking about a 12-year-old's side-splitting sense of humor, which everyone says reminds them of how Uncle Harry made us laugh until we cried. We might be talking about how Mom plans the family re-union for 110 people every year, where a thou-

sand details come out *just right*. How does she do that? Where did she learn that? Maybe we are talking about the way brother David can walk up to any animal and they never walk away from him or fear him. Or Cousin Elise's way with children, who seem instantly to trust her and feel safe with her. Or maybe this is about Cousin Fred's uncanny instinct, from his first paper route to his grain elevator operation today, which tells him how to run a business successfully and market it profitably, though he's never *studied* business! Or maybe we are talking about the way Bill can pick up any musical instrument and be playing it within a month. Or how about ... well, you get the idea.

In our society, little attention is paid to that from which no corporation can profit. No one can sell you and your children what you already own. There will always be someone ready to exploit your free gifts, to sell you something that appears to enhance your God-given gifts, or even convince you that the magic resides in what they are selling. Don't be fooled. As a mother, you may have abundant intuition about what to do for your ailing child, but the marketing forces that dominate our lives will try to convince you that you must run down to the drugstore for an over-the-counter solution. The delight you found in reading the terrific book you just happened on does not flow from its contents but from your ability to appreciate it, just as your inner sense of beauty enables you to be filled by the glorious sunset you just witnessed. It's the gift inside you – there from birth – that enables you to be filled up by these things.

No, Fannie, you were not left empty.

May you and yours enjoy your forgotten gifts this Christmas.

Please send me topics or issues you'd like to see discussed in this column: mail4bobh@gmail.com Or send a note to me (Attn: Bob Herman) through *The Prairie Advocate*. I also welcome opportunities to meet personally with any group interested in discussing family or child-rearing topics (at no fee).

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of the holiday be with you
and yours this season and
throughout the New Year.*

From Everyone at

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Ice Skating at Read Park Rink

The Read Park Ice Skating Rink is now open to the public until further notice. General hours for public skating will be from dawn until 9:00 PM, Monday – Sunday. However, the rink may be closed periodically for maintenance and scheduled programs.

Please call the Freeport Park District's ice skating and sledding hotline at 815-235-6114 ex. 8 for the latest conditions and facility closures before making a trip to the ice rink. The Read Park Ice Rink is an outdoor facility located on American St. near the Read Park Family Aquatic Center.

Thursday nights will be reserved for ice hockey at the Read Park Ice Rink from 6:30 – 9:00 PM. General skating may be closed at this time to accommodate full rink hockey. There is no cost to participate.

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*This important message brought to you by
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