

Life's lessons from children's books

I learned in my young adult life that there was a lot of good things to learn from Children's books. These books have good things to teach children and, if you let them, adults. As you read to a child, make sure you pay attention to all of the things these books have to say.

I enjoyed reading to my girls, but I really enjoyed sitting back and listening while my wife read to each daughter. From the works of various authors we learn that life can be fun, sad, scary and comforting.

Through stories, you learn that you shouldn't touch things that do not belong to you. While in real life the town does not fill up with pasta, things can break and that could hurt someone you care about.

You learn that being polite should be a good habit and not something you need written on your hands. You learn that good friends can have fights and still be friends.

Sometimes bunnies do the wrong things, but they find that their mother still loves them. Yes, I've learned a lot over the years just from reading children's books. More than I can remember, but maybe after some bread and jam, I will try something new.

Bad Dreams

When the girls were growing up, they had their share of bad

dreams, monsters under the bed or in the closet. At one point during all of this, I gave a daughter one of my stuffed dragons. I had quite the collection of stuffed dragons. They were out numbered by the stuffed raccoons, but I didn't buy the dragons.

One fateful, and apparently dreadful, night I gave my daughter a little stuffed dragon. I told her how it would protect her from all the scary things at night. Dragons, of course, can breathe fire, and attack all the scary things in the room. This little dragon would do all it could to keep my little girl safe. It worked, and there were far less scary dreams or things that went bump in the night.

The dragon was passed to the next daughter and so on. My youngest still has him sitting on her bed. Her nightmares seem to be under control.

As it happens, my darling granddaughter was having nightmare/monster problems. I went out to pick up a dragon to protect her from the bumpy night things. I think I'll need to ask how it is going with that little dragon.

Another little thing in life, that seemed to make a difference.

Little things in life

Many years ago, when my oldest daughter was my only daughter I took her to a movie. She was being a bit of a handful at home, and my dear wife was confined to bed rest with limited mobility. The circumstances requiring that rest are for a different time, this is a bit more light hearted. With that said I embarked with my 3.5 year old daughter for a day of

father/daughter fun.

Fun was a conditional word for the day. My darling little girl would not sit still for much of anything. She was (and still is) on the go most of the time. The only thing I know of that does slow her down is a good book. At that time, good books only lasted 5 to 10 minutes tops. My wife questioned my decision of taking her to a movie, but since she wasn't going to be there, she wished me good luck as I left the apartment.

The conversation on the way to the theater went something like this:

"What is a movie Daddy?"

"It is kind of like your cartoons, without the commercials."

"But, I like commercials Daddy, they show me all the new toys."

"I think you will like the movie."

"What is the movie about Daddy?"

"I don't know, I haven't seen it. It has bears in it."

"I like bears. Are these friendly bears, I only like friendly bears."

"Well, it is called 'The Care Bears Movie', so I think they are friendly."

"WHAT is a Care Bear? Is it like a polar BEAR? You know, the white ones."

"No, not a polar bear, these bears are blue, pink, and other colors."

"I've never seen a pink bear. I think I will like that one. Will there be red ones? I like red. I like blue too. I wonder if there are purple bears. I would like to meet a purple bear. Do you think I will ever meet a purple bear Daddy?. That would be neat. I think a purple bear would be lots of fun. I wonder if the bears growl. Do you think they growl Daddy? Most bears growl you know. Bears are big and they eat meat. Did you know they eat meat. I saw the bears at the zoo eat fish and other stuff. The fish wasn't cooked. Did you know they don't cook the food for bears? I wonder if there are other animals in the

movie. I like all kinds of animals. Mommy likes Raccoons. I like them too. They always wear masks. Did you know that you can't take off a Raccoon's mask Daddy?...."

Yes, my daughter just started rambling after a bit. Funny how that didn't change much. I don't think I had much to say after she started going. If this was going to be the way the afternoon went, the movie was going to be really long. We got to the theater and it was packed full of very young children and their frazzled parents or grandparents. I'm sure there were a couple of frazzled friends, uncles and aunts around too. The theater was just full of noisy, energetic children.

And then the movie started. There was a pre-movie to the main feature. If I recall correctly it was a "Rainbow Brite" short. The kids, if possible got louder during that short. It didn't seem to hold anyones attention. I was glad it was a short film, and that the main film was just over an hour.

But then the main feature started. I'm not sure how it started, it has been a while since I've seen it, but a hush fell over the theater. Every child in the room was staring at the screen. It was amazing. As the children started to get a bit antsy, the movie switched course. As they got scared, it switched course again. The attention of all of the children was rapt during the 77 minutes of the movie. My attention was on the course of the movie and the affect it had on the audience. I had never been in a movie that seemed to be completely made for its target audience. I was impressed. I heard similar ponderings from other parents as we left the theater. I would have to tell this to my dear wife. If it had been possible, it would have amazed her too. My daughter, fell in love with Care Bears that day...

At some later date, we were doing a bit of shopping. At the checkout counter there was a package of "Care Bear" underwear in my daughter's size. I said to my lovely wife that we should get some for the dear daughter. I was told that she didn't

need them. This wasn't about need, it was about giving her something she would really like. The cost wasn't much. They weren't the best, and wouldn't last that long. But they would make a little girl happy for a while. Little things like that can really make a difference. I'm not sure my wife understood at the time. She hadn't seen the movie yet, and it seemed like a silly thing to get. Of course it was silly. It was a spur of the moment decision. That's why they put those things at the check out counters.

As it turned out, I was entirely correct in my assumption that they would be accepted with glee. I think we had to go out to get at least one more set, since they were the underwear of choice for a long time.

Little things in life make lasting impressions. My daughter will still tell of getting the "Care Bear" underwear to this day. She remembers it from all those years ago. The reason behind the first father/daughter movie day is still etched in my brain, but the results of that day are engraved with a deeper groove. Time spent with those you love. Sharing things that you enjoy. Sharing new experiences. Little things that grow into bigger things. They become family stories. They shape our memories.

Little things in life don't take much effort, but the reward can be great.

I hope the little things in your life were good memories. I know that "little things" do not have to be good things, but I find as I look back I remember fewer of the bad things. Memories are like that. For that I am thankful.

As a side note, the three of us went to see that movie one more time. Little one wanted to share it with her mommy. The same thing happened in the theater again. In all these years, I've never seen that reaction to a movie again. Maybe that isn't such a little thing after all.

Are we there yet?

The next story will be totally made up from bits and pieces of the stories I heard about the road trip...

Many years ago, my oldest daughter was around 9 (almost 10) and the next daughter was 5. They took a road trip out to California with their grandparents. It was the oldest's second trip out. What I remember from the stories is that the youngest on the trip would be able to find any McDonalds, even with her eyes closed. They were able to visit relatives. There were fireworks, but somebody slept through them. I think Uncle Butch had a Hot Tub. There littlest sister was born that year (I think). If the little sister is correct, then a new cousin was waiting for them in California. It has been so long, I think I need input from the people who actually went. I have bits and pieces in my memory, and it must have been some road trip for the grandparents. Maybe, just maybe I will transpose different people and really make the thing up. ☐

Ready for a road trip of my own...

A slightly different twist

A complete story this time. Some who have heard it before, may see a different spin on it.

It was a warm sunny day in the early spring. A young mother was waiting for her daughter to get home from kindergarten. Her youngest was getting rambunctious and really needed her

older sister to play with. It was a trying time for the mother, she spent most of her day alone with only children to talk to. If you've ever been the parent of young children, you can understand the yearning for adult conversation. Yes, motherhood could be trying, but to see the smiles in her children's eyes made it all worthwhile.

Little Katie finally made it home from school with a big "Hi Mommy, I'm home."

Hugs were given and received. Lunch was served and eaten. The two girls went off to play. Finally, the mother could get some things done. There was laundry to do of course, but she really wanted some time to sit with a project she had going. Who knows what the project was for the day. It could have been anything from finishing a dress for one of her children, or knitting a blanket for someone's new baby. These were much easier to handle when the two girls were playing together. And with the older one gone part of the day, it seemed like they didn't have as many fights.

It didn't take too long before the girls wanted to go outside. It had been wet and rainy recently, and this was the first sunny day in a long time. Jenny came to ask her mother if she could go outside with her sister.

"As long as you don't get your clothes dirty, you can go out to play." , was her mother's reply. And she returned to her project.

It didn't take long before Katie came into the room and wanted to use the hose. Of course her mother said, "No Katie, I don't want you to touch the hose.".

Slightly saddened, Katie went back outside to play.

A long time passed, the project was finished and it was quiet. Too quiet. From some premonition that some parents get, she knew that something wasn't quite right. The mother went

outside to see what was going on with her two darlings.

She found them. Oh yes, she found them kneeling in a puddle, covered with mud and the hose was running, slowly making the puddle bigger. They were playing, splashing and laughing. They didn't see their mother come up to them.

With her temper rising, the mother first asked her youngest daughter, "Why are your clothes dirty? I thought I told you not to get them dirty."

Jenny's response was "But these aren't my clothes mommy, Katie said I could wear hers."

Her mother looked and sure enough, the clothes were a bit too big.

"What about you young lady? I told you not to touch the hose."

"But mommy," piped in Jenny again, "Katie didn't touch the hose. I'm a big girl now, I can turn on the hose myself."

What was a mother to do? Her daughters followed her instructions exactly. Oh yes, the letter of the law was stretched, but the elastic didn't break. What would she do?

Firmly she said "Stay here!" to her daughters. She went inside. Her daughters trembled with a little fear. Of course they knew their mother was mad. They had no idea of what was to come. They didn't like thinking about it, but they didn't want to make matters worse, so they stayed right where they were.

In a few minutes the young mother came out again. In her hands, she held a camera. Pictures of two very muddy girls were taken. Excess mud was rinsed off. Baths were taken. Snacks eaten. All was right with this little family. The rest of the day was as normal as any other.

May you find, as this family did, that it is usually best to

keep your temper, and try to find something good in every situation.

Would you read stuff like this?

It was a fairy tale life. Everything went well for them. They had beautiful, loving daughters. They had a roof over their heads, and food on the table. They were living their happily ever after. Now don't get me wrong, the two were not a king and queen. They weren't even a prince and princess. They had no royal blood to speak of, but they had each other. This meant that they had everything.

As their children grew, they knew that they would need to adjust their lives to accommodate knowing each other again. They started when the youngest was almost five years old. They made time to be friends again. During this time they talked of their children, of course. Their daughters were an important part of their lives, and their well being was discussed often. But they also talked about themselves. They talked about their problems and joys. Most of all they talked about their futures.

I will have to say that the future looked bright for this pair. Everyone who knew them would have said the same thing. It was funny, but they really seemed to be on the same page. Most of the time, if you saw one of them, the other would not be far away. They liked it that way. Together, they were more than they could be apart.

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Make the day special

This is one of those days, a day made special. What makes it special? Not much going on, other than a breakfast of pancakes, sausage and real maple syrup. My little family looks forward to this day all year. The pancakes are pretty ordinary. The sausage is usually top notch. The maple syrup is locally produced heaven in a bottle. In all of that, the day is just another day. But for my little family, this day is special. It has been special for many years.

I'm not sure what year it began, but our little town has a Maple Syrup Fest every spring. This was not the first maple syrup festival I went to, but it has been one that I've been to the most. Our local Maple Syrup Producers use this day to advertise their product, and share it with the community. An educational day, to see how the syrup is produced. Of course you get to taste the finished product in many forms. But really, once you've seen it a few times, you could give the tour yourself. Again, not much there to make it special is there? But for us the day is still special.

You may ask yourself why. I have many times. The answer is quite simple. We took an ordinary event and made it that way. We found a shared joy in family and friends. A simple task of sharing a meal of sticky sweet syrup, combined with a wagon ride to see a few maple trees. A choice was made to make this day a little different than the rest.

This day had its beginnings in the shadow of a slight bit of depression. It was a day to help someone get out of the "winter blues". One year, a choice was made to get out and enjoy an earlier spring day. And so, our yearly visit to a maple syrup festival was born. It became the thing to do in

early spring. It continued, year after year, to be a source of fun for the entire family.

Other days were added to that list, not just in spring time, but all year round. Not just to combat a bit of the seasonal blues, although that was on the top of the list, but to enjoy family and the company of others. We make those days special.

This is very important in life. We go along day by day. We do the same things over and over again. We go to work or school, we come home after the day has ended and we wait to start all over the next day. How boring that would be if that was all we did. But our society made some special days. Most of us call them the weekend. Days outside of the ordinary. Days we look forward to. I also think we need to add extraordinary days. Something to anticipate. Something to hold in heart. Those days need to be shared. They can be shared with family or friends. They are days that lift the heart and the mind. We make them that way and those days find their way into our stories and shared experience.

Some of the special days were started and shared with just one person. Those days are no longer shared, but they still hold a comfortable place in my life. They were days we made together.

A very important life lesson was learned many years ago. Any day can be special. Any day can be held above the rest. We look for those days and hold them dear, because we made them. They are ours. Maybe this is part of seizing the day?

... To be continued...

I think it was in the Spring

On an early spring day, I decided to host an apartment warming. There would be good food, good friends, wonderful conversation and maybe a game or two. All went as planned and a wonderful evening evolved. It was on that evening I met a very special person. When we were introduced, I received a quick, shy smile and a quick chaste hug. After that evening we became friends, started dating, got engaged and finally married. Our marriage lasted almost 20 years, until the time of her death. In the years that followed, I found that the seeds that marriage planted were far flung and all inclusive in my life. And to think, it all started with a smile.

I thought about writing a story of our life together. That is a story worth telling, but I have a feeling the audience would be limited. I think a better story, would be the story of the life lessons we learned along the way. Things that would and do impact most people along their lives. I found through the years that the things we hold dear and important in our lives are usually shared ideals with others. to be continued...

It's the little things in life.

I've been building up to writing a bit more on the blog. One by one, post by post there will be a story evolving. This is for me, it is for my family and I will share with my friends Things I've thought about over the past few years, but never put to written word. I'm open to all comments on this project, as it deals with the things I've found to be important in

life.

This first post will eventually form an introduction, chapters will follow. Things will be added, subtracted. Until I deem this to be a “finished project” Posts will be edited and changed. This is life, this is love and this is a smile.

I will start with a look back and end with a look forward, time will be filled.