

Sharing a smile

We are taught early in life that it is good to share. Most of us at that young age really don't want to share things that we consider ours. We will happily share things that don't belong to us, especially if the item belongs to an older sibling. ☐ Hopefully, as time goes by it gets easier to share things we have.

We can share our 'stuff' with others. Give money to the charity. Give items to various thrift shops. By food and sundries for a local soup kitchen or food pantry. Local agencies of many kinds ask for donations of money, food, clothing and even blood. Yes, we can share our stuff with others.

We can share our time with others. Volunteering at the above locations is also a way of sharing. We can help our friends, neighbors and other members of our community by doing things for them, that they are unable to do by themselves. Our time is precious and it can be shared.

When we get closer to people (friends, family, loved ones) we often share our emotions. This can be difficult for some, but it can be very rewarding to both parties. Because of the nature of this sharing, it can, at times, cause pain and heartache. Emotional sharing opens many doorways to our souls.

But even when we have no 'stuff', time, or deep emotions to share, it can be easy and wonderful to share one last thing. With almost no effort on our part we can share a smile. Smiles, like yawns, can be infectious. Start a smile in a room and see how many others share your smile. Start laughing in a room and see how long it takes for that to make the rounds.

I've found that sharing smiles and laughter are some of the best things to share. It will make a lasting impression on those you meet, and generally that impression will be a good

one.

□

Words of life

As I live life, talk with friends, watch movies, or live theater, I come across words that in some way touch my life. That touch may only be for a second or two, but the results can be extraordinary.

Last night, I was humbled. People came down after the show to express their gratitude for our acting. My little performance received high praise from many people. As I said, I was humbled. This is a role, as late early this week, I did not feel was my best effort. I am very glad it pleased the audience. Those short “thank yous” meant a lot to me.

Over the course of my life, I’ve been fascinated with words and our ability to communicate many things with those words and how we say them. Written communication can never compete with the vocal/visual combination, but they do have some effect on the way I view things. If they didn’t, I don’t think I would be writing a blog.

Being able to communicate well is helpful in most situations. There are times that I wish my skills in this area were better, but I will take what I have. Of course I want to share the words that have touched my life in some way or another.

Around in the winter of 1983 and 1984 I started hearing the words “Hi Daddy” from a precocious 2 year old. Those two words changed my life. In her eyes, I was daddy from the time those words were uttered. According to the State, it took until

1985. I was able to hear those words from 3 other lovely young ladies over the past years too. Sometimes I wonder what I did to be able to hear those words with the love that is evident every time they say them.

Of course, other words from my family have also deeply touched me. Words like: "Father of the Bride", "Husband and Wife", "I love you." There have been sad words too. "I'm sorry we couldn't do more.", "We need to go to the hospital (or emergency room).", "We don't know.", "It was a heart attack.", "It was cancer."

And with my family there were also many movie quotes that are used in our daily lives. Here are a few that I think are special.

This is my family. I found it, all on my own. Is little, and broken, but still good. Yeah, still good.

I always have a wonderful time, wherever I am, whomever I'm with.

No matter what happens tomorrow, or the rest of my life, I'm happy now because I love you.

Years ago my mother used to say to me, she'd say, "In this world, Elwood, you must be" – she always called me Elwood – "In this world, Elwood, you must be oh so smart or oh so pleasant." Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant. You may quote me.

I'll give you a winter prediction: It's gonna be cold, it's gonna be grey, and it's gonna last you for the rest of your life.

I know. You know I know. I know you know I know. We know

Henry knows. And Henry knows we know it. We're a knowledgeable family.

Words and how they are said make a difference. That is one reason I am careful with the words that come from my mouth, pen or keyboard.

A night off

I'm sitting here doing a lot of nothing. No rehearsal, no lines to memorize, chores that can be put off for a day or two. All of that is good, because I'm in desperate need to rest my throat a bit. I have one part in the show that I really have to force my voice a bit. Every rehearsal, I need some liquid to help sooth my throat. Part of this is the voice I use, and the other is my winter sinus problems. If it was just one of the two, my throat would be fine. So tonight I relax and maybe drink some hot tea.

Not much more to say. Life is boring, and for tonight that is good. ☐

This day in History

On January 20th, 1984 I left the realm of being single and became a married man. That same year, NW Ohio was under a bitter cold spell and the daytime high temps were below 0 Fahrenheit. I was also blissfully happy, as all newlyweds should be.

On January 20th, 1994 I was married for 10 years. Father of 4 beautiful daughters. We were very happy family. I'm not sure if much else happened that day.

January 20th, 2003 this was our 19th and last anniversary together, we just didn't know it then. Still happy.

January 20th, 2004, my first anniversary alone. Not very happy, nothing else happened that day in my life. Should have been 20 years.

On January 20th, 2009 I should have been married 25 years. I am sure that if my wife had lived, I still would have been blissfully happy. On that day the first black American became President of the U.S.A. That seemed inconsequential to me.

Funny how an important day in your life can color the history around it.

Proof I'm getting older...

I think I'm in the final stages of some illness. I lost most of my voice for a day and 1/2. On top of that I had a headache that would not go away for long. It was there, and then it got better. But then it came back again. The headache is gone, the sore throat is better. I can talk without pain now, so that is good.

But today I had to go out and split some wood. It is supposed to get cold this weekend, so I wanted to make sure I had enough wood. I really didn't want to go out to get wood in single digit temps. It looks like I will have to go out in the cold. I couldn't spend more than 1/2 hour splitting wood. I know I'm just getting over something, but I didn't feel like

my energy was that drained.

Now none of this is indication of getting older. No, it is just an indication that I was sick. The older part is the wood I brought up to the house. I've been cutting wood since I was 15 when I helped my Dad. I've spent a good 35 years knowing what wood was good to burn and what wasn't. All the wood I split today, and the stuff I brought up to the house before I was sick was from trees that don't give off good heat. Hmmm. Now I forgot all about wood that was good to burn. I guess I shouldn't be too hard on myself, because of the large variety of wood I was cutting. The cut pieces were all mixed in together. Tomorrow I need to some good wood up to the house. I hope I can determine what is good to burn.

A winter prediction

I'll give you a winter prediction: It's gonna be cold, it's gonna be grey, and it's gonna last you for the rest of your life.

A quote from a movie I watch over and over again, kind of matches the forecast for this weekend. It's going to be cold and most likely grey, but I'm fairly certain it won't last for the rest of your life. But is this quote an indication of the weather, or the ramblings of a depressed man? At the point it is said, I would say the latter.

For me it is an indication that I need to get more firewood up to the house. With weather getting down to the single digits, I want some wood that will burn long and hot. I don't want to have to go outside often to get more wood, and I want to make sure the fire puts out enough heat to keep my heating bills a bit lower.

I have some good wood, but I need to be careful with the wood I bring to the house. There were multiple trees knocked over when the big oak fell. The oak burns very well if dry, but there are other types of trees in the fallen lumber that are not oak. Some burn well, some do not. So while moving the wood, I need to pick and choose the good burning wood.

So there is another metaphor on life. You need to pick the good stuff, the stuff you need to make life warm and comfortable.

May you find some warmth on cold winter nights.

Pictures of that big tree. My daughter stands about 5 feet tall, she is about 15 feet from what was ground level of this tree.



Close Up same tree, same daughter.



A few days late, but...

it was an almost perfect Christmas.

The day started with going to a movie with my grandchildren, their parents and my youngest daughter. The movie was not my first choice, but it did impress my grandchildren, and I was happy to be there.

Then came dinner with my wife's family, with all of my daughters and their respective husbands (if any), my grandchildren. Dinner was very good. Turkey, hot and cold vegetables, bread, stuffing, jello, pie, cookies, cake were all shared. Good talk with wonderful company.

Presents were unwrapped and almost everyone enjoyed themselves. One young man did not want to be part of the Christmas festivities, but that comes with his age. My day was filled with family and good times.

Feelings of loss also were in the house. Parents who lost children, a husband who lost a wife, the loss of a good friend, and the loss of grandchildren. These losses colored the gathering, but did not overwhelm. Colors that enhanced and shadow the picture. The colors give everything depth and meaning.

What is life, if not sharing good times and loss. That makes a very Merry Christmas indeed.

Christmas Traditions

Celebrating Christmas could include food, family, friends, and gifts. Additional Family traditions could have a mandatory attendance to a Christmas Eve Service.

Our family traditions have been ongoing since the day after Thanksgiving. That was when it was 'allowed' to start thinking about Christmas. We could start to break out the Christmas music, movies and decorations. The stockings were hung up, with care, by Dec 6th. Small gifts, some candy and maybe a bit of fresh fruit would fill the stocking. Usually a Christmas ornament would arrive in the stocking, and it could then be hung on the tree.

For the past few years, most traditions have gone by the wayside. As a family we would still hang up the stockings on 6th, small gifts would be placed there. The Decorations of the past just don't make their appearance. Certain things still

show up. We watch many versions of Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. There are the many other Christmas movies. And as my children grow up and start their own lives, they get to start their own traditions.

Families expand and contract. Traditions come and go. To share life, love, troubles and sadness are ways to bypass all traditions. In that sharing we find peace and hope.

To you and yours in this season. May you find what you need and have what is required. Merry Christmas.

I had to share this.

I'm stealing this, but I thought it was funny.

I had a flat tire on interstate 80, so I eased my car over to the shoulder of the road, carefully got out of the car and opened the trunk. I took out 2 cardboard men, unfolded them and stood them at the rear of my car facing oncoming traffic. They look so life like you wouldn't believe it!

They are in trench coats exposing their nude bodies to the approaching drivers.

To my surprise, cars start slowing down looking at my lifelike men which made it safer for me to work at the side of the road.

And of course, traffic starts backing up. Everybody is tooting their horns, yelling and waving like crazy. It wasn't long before a state trooper pulls up behind me.

He gets out of his car and starts walking towards me. I could tell he was not a happy camper!

'What's going on here?'

'My car has a flat tire', I said calmly.

'Well, what the hell are those obscene cardboard men doing here by the road?'

I couldn't believe that he didn't know..

So I told him, 'Helloooooo, those are my Emergency Flashers.'

Cold Winter Nights

A warm fire, hot drink and I guess I'm comfortable, but something is missing.

That second cup of tea is no longer needed or made. The choice of movies no longer discussed. My 6th Christmas without you. That is truly a cold winter night.