

A tale of two gatherings...

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... (Sorry Mr. Dickens)

But then again it was. This weekend families gathered to mark similar yet different events.

On Saturday, my nephew celebrated his birthday. He has reached his teen years, and is more interested in the presents, food and television than the actual gathering. I do believe he 'suffered' through the gathering just to make sure he got his presents. Nothing really wrong with that, I'm sure most young people of his age do exactly the same thing. The gatherings, unless totally oriented toward the youth, are for the adults. We ate, talked, laughed and remembered many of these events during the day. This is what, through the ages, kept families together. We share common bonds and we celebrate those bonds. Be they birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, times with family and friends keep our bonds alive.

On Sunday, another gathering was held. This was a memorial of the birth and death day of my grandson. He received no physical presents, and he won't be living into his teen years to complain about the attention he is or isn't getting. This was a day to support those who will miss his presence in the world. It was a time for family and friends to gather and support one another. We ate, talked, laughed and remember many events, but we also shared a tear or two. Coming together in the hard times is another thing that keeps families together. Death, sickness and other troubles are also something we all share. Another common bond. Another way to show support and love.

While on the surface, I wish that all we ever had to do was share the happy occasions, I realize that it is the difficult situations that are the true measure of what we mean to each

other. These hard times can show the best humanity has to offer.

So this weekend was the best of times and the worst of times, with the best of times far outshining the worst. Those closest to the sadness may not feel this for quite some time, but in looking back they will eventually remember "The Best of Times."