



Introduction

The story of a cancer patient and the lessons learned from the opportunity...

"No matter what kind of person
you are, it will help to organize
your ideas and present them to
help others..."

John P. Vanelli

By Helping You I'm Helping Myself

Every morning the sun rises, the clouds are puffy white and there is a mild breeze blowing. Imagine in your mind this to be so, a perfect world if there can be. But it's not! So, I begin my day in prayer. I pray mostly for myself and then for others. I conclude my prayer with a reading from "Daily Strength for Daily Needs" by Victor M. Parachin. On April 2, as I began to read I came across a paragraph that seemed to give me an answer of the opportunities one can get from the meaning of life.

"We gain strength by giving strength. Inherent in God's call to act with love, kindness, and compassion is our own experience of healing through helping. It is a grace of God that when we ease the pain of others, our own burdens become lighter. The truth is that when we are busy serving others, life is, no longer meaningless."

This was the way my mother lived her life, and tried to teach us daily. Somehow, I never excepted or was willing to give this theory much thought. Until now! You see my mother suffered from lung cancer and died very early in life. But in that short period of time she actually lived a full life, by helping others. Her standards were higher than most and it took this dread disease to show me the way.

Looking back, I can see this way of life and reasons why she did the things she did. During the homily of her mass, the priest said these words:

**A WOMAN OF QUIET COURAGE AND WARMTH - COMPASSION, STRENGTH,
FIRMNESS OF PURPOSE WITH GENTLENESS OF MANNER RELUCTANCE TO
BE IN THE FOREGROUND, YET SO ACTIVE IN THE BACKGROUND.**

**A WOMAN OF FAITH, WHOSE PRAYER WAS PROFOUND. HERITAGE TO HER FAMILY IS
RICH HERTIAGE OF UNSELFISH LOVE, A LOVE THAT IS SO EVIDENT AMONG YOU.**

Why so much suffering for so good a woman? Why should she have died so soon?

The answers to these two questions was in the way my mother lived her life. She would always say: "Never trade places with anyone.", "There is always room for one more". "Be careful what you wish for, it may come true"., "Always thank God for what you have and not what you don't have". This is how my mother would talk to us when we had questions about life. At the time it seemed like riddles, but now I understand that she was preparing us for our life's journey.

How do you gain strength or courage from illness or by helping others? I remember someone saying "If you make someone happy, you'll be happy too". But how? Where can you find happiness from this type of disease?

It took a long time for me to see the irony in these questions. By helping someone you help yourself. It came to me when I was lying in bed in the hospital. It was quite simple. Yes you should concentrate on helping yourself, but you should take time to help someone less fortunate. You see as I was lying in that bed I saw other people who were suffering more than me. I was really fortunate not to suffer like those people. Cancer is a disease that takes the very fiber of your being and transforms it into nothingness. At birth everyone was given the same formula of survival. "Positive attitude, humor, and the will to survive. These are traits that help you cope with illness, depression, and hopelessness. However, during your life, man has influenced these traits and has changed them into what you think or do now. They say actions are stronger than words, and what you see or do will reflect what type of character you have. These traits effect everyone, rich or poor, healthy or ill.

Life is what you make of it. You can go through life happy or sad, you can acquire wealth, debt, or live life in hopelessness. You see life has choices. And for every choice you make it carries with it consequences. Opportunity is what you make from these choices. By helping you I help myself, that's the choice I will live with... Thanks Mom!

A Day To Remember

Flying into NYC, Jonathan looked down at the city's landscape. He was beaming with excitement. For today was a special day, he was going to meet his special friend. Jonathan would often wonder what he would say when he got to meet the greatest coach in basketball. As the press conference began Jonathan took his seat. Reaching for his press kit, he looked up as the coach walked into the room. He sat motionless as he walked by, not saying a word. So often Jonathan would rehearse what he would say to him if he ever met him in person. But today, he just could not say or do anything. The moment arrived and passed, however Jonathan could not say anything. Jonathan sank slowly into his seat as the press conference ended and the coach left the room. Why didn't I say anything to him. I always dreamed of meeting him and suddenly that moment arrived, but passed and I froze without saying a word. Why! This question bothered Jonathan for the rest of the day. How could I ever do that? Why! He said to himself.

The room was almost empty now, Pelly who was waiting outside was worried when Jonathan didn't come out. Suddenly Pelly entered the room and spotted Jonathan across the room. Walking toward him Pelly asked Jonathan what seemed to be the trouble. Jonathan looked up sadly. Pelly my favorite coach, you know the one I always talked about. Yeah Jonathan, I know I remember. That was the coach you always dreamed of meeting. Yes Pelly, I just froze and did not say a word. Why! Then he put his head softly into his hands. Well, Jonathan! Sometimes it happens but just think! Some people live their whole lives without a happy moment. But you Jonathan, had your dream appear in person. Within inches of you. How exciting.

Pelly, I really wanted to talk to him! Why couldn't I. Why! Jonathan, Pelly remarked, even if you didn't say a word, you experienced something more wonderful. Yes it would have be great if you could have talked to him, but you didn't. Your feeling for that few seconds would last a life time. No one could ever take that moment away from you. Never! Jonathan, began to think. Maybe Pelly is right. Even if I didn't talk to him, I still have that memory of being in the same room with him. And he did look my way. Besides, he is allowed his privacy. Just like I am allowed mine. So Pelly! Jonathan said; Let me get this straight. Even if I didn't talk to him, I still have that wonderful memory. Pelly smiled, and smile that said it all. Jonathan smiled back and said thanks, I feel better now!!!

Amazing Adventure Of Vicky Victoria

The story of commitment

FLASHBACK: In a previous story we found Vicky Victoria trapped with a conflict of change. Trivial, compared to our new adventure that may prove interesting even amusing to our heroine.

In this adventure titled: THE THREE LEVELS OF COMMITMENT, subtitled A CIRCLE OF VARIOUS LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT.

Vicky Victoria traveled through time and space, to look for an answer that bewilders the most scholarly minds. That of commitment! She would read through volumes of books and ask many questions in her search to find these levels of commitment. While traveling she met a learned individual, who seemed to know of what she was searching. Long ago, in the highest mountains, lived a true master of spiritual beings a master of everything. There he said you will find the end of your search. Where is such a place she asked? You will know when you find it and to whom you will see...the individual said. Then he disappeared.

Puzzled and confused, she asked a travel agent to book her on a flight to the highest mountain range in the world. A place where she could search for the wisest of people and the creator of commitment. The agent thought, I know of such a place? Vicky was excited for she thought the agent really knew of this place. Looking through brochures the agent began to plan her search. It seemed that the agent was really going to help find

this place, Vicky was searching. At last I will be able to end my search of commitment she thought to herself. As they said their good-byes, Vicky felt very comfortable about the arrangements. Soon she would travel to the remote corner of the world to end her search for the three levels of commitment.

This seemed to be a long journey as she was thinking to herself. Countless hours of reading and asking questions, will I be able to end my search and finally discover the three levels of commitment, when I reach my destination. The plane taxied the runway and Vicky fell fast asleep. Suddenly she was awoken as the plane landed at her destination. She retrieved the documents the agent gave her and went to find the contacts she had hired through the agent. Everything, fell into place, she was happy. Several hours passed as she entered a remote village. The village was old and the villagers seemed happy and content. She was to ask questions about the levels of commitment and all the villagers pointed to what seemed the highest mountain range. There you will find the questions you search an elderly villager said?

The journey is long, dangerous, and at the top you will meet a person who is master of spiritual beings and master of everything. This individual can help even the lost of souls the elder villager said. Go now follow the road of enlightenment. Soon she began and journeyed up the mountain path. There she met people in search of different answers. No two people were exactly alike. Each had their quests.

Finally, she reached the top and like the individual before and the elder villager met a person who she believed to be the spiritual master and master of everything. What can I help you with the person said? I am looking for the three levels of commitment she replied. Reaching into his robe, he pulled out a book. Here is what you seek he said. Quickly Vicky Victoria reached for the book. Looking inside she noticed blank pages. Confused she asked why are these pages blank? The thing you search for has been with you all the time. You learn from knowledge, you develop yourself through feeling and experience he said. She could not accept this theory. I have traveled many years and read many books and all you could tell me is that I have the key. Angered at the suggestion she asked why is not there more? So the mystical person again reaching into his robe pulled another book from it. Is this what you search? No more tricks she said! The book opened and there was written the Three Levels of Commitment. This time a smile appeared on her face. Yes, she said! Finally this is what I was searching. The person soon disappeared, leaving Vicky to read still another book.

Vicky Victoria finds herself beginning at the top with our most cherished institution of commitment that of marriage. This institution was started long ago in biblical times with the development of Adam and Eve and traveled though the ages as the most sacred. This commitment was the most binding and here Vicky Victoria would find words like sharing, security, honesty and trust. Turning the page, she leaves this area with a sense of fulfillment.

She slowly slips into our next level that of relationships. (Less rewarding then the first but still very close to the top). She senses caring, companionship and a lesser level of trust known as understanding and satisfaction. As she leaves these two areas, her feeling of security also seems to leave. Finally she slips into deep depression. Vicky Victoria sees this lowest level of commitment that of involvement, a level that reaches lower than a mask-less face. An area of loneliness so amazing that the word unattached seems hopeful. In this level she feels something missing. Something so basic, which could enrich even the most hopeless situations. Something that is required, always desired in most meaningful relationships...Trust and Honesty. How do you get trust and honesty in such relationships? Suddenly the wisest of individuals returned to find Vicky Victoria crying in disbelief. Was this what I was searching for on my journey of enlightenment? How could this be so unfair? With a brush of his hand the spiritual master, dried Vicky's tears. Why did you show me this book she asked? You requested it he replied.

You see life is an experience, what you read was other people's life experiences, that is why I gave you a blank book. You know what the three levels of commitment were along. You fill in the blanks. Only you can explain life's experiences. I have read hundred of books and asked many questions, so why could I not find these levels. Books and questions contain only those experiences that people believe them to have. You alone develop commitment. You cannot start at the top to develop something special it has to be nurtured and formed from two individuals. Life has many paths. Soon these paths meet and involvement begins. It can take many involvement's to nurture and take you to the next levels. Sometimes these paths wander and slip back into the lower levels but it takes commitment to keep you going forward. A commitment from two individuals. After

listening to the theory of commitment Vicky again felt relieved. You are the spiritual master and master of everything she said with a smile. No, I am only a poor monk, who can listen to people and help them find their answers.

Remember:

- Search no farther than your heart and mind.
- Look to your own experiences
- Life is a meandering river filled with pitfalls and memories.

How do you spell Determination?

This is the second part of the trilogy. Do you remember the rebirth of self-pity? When he transformed himself in determination. This is the continuing story and how he traveled through life.

Determination was so proud of his transformation, that he gave lectures every Saturday night in the town hall. The towns people would listen for hours on the goals and plans he would obtain. He was very positive in his talks and when asked a question about negativity he would carefully turn it into a positive response.

The towns people were very proud of their treasure. And determination was proud of his town. Determination would spend hours in the library learning everything he could about the world around him. He would ask the wisest of the towns elderly about the history of the town and what was it like to live in around the turn of the century. He knew that things change and tried to study trends and feelings of people. He knew he needed more. For the town was small and he felt that he was ready to journey to the big city. The city he was told was fast paced. All different types of cultures lived there. City life was exciting and he thought this would further his education.

One day as he was to begin his journey, he stopped by one of the towns elderly and asked him some questions. What is it like in the city Determination said to the elderly gentleman? What will I encounter there? Do you think I am ready for this journey? The old man just rocked back and forth in his chair smoking his long pipe, he acquired from his father's father. Determination was waiting for an answer. Suddenly the old man stopped and said I guess you are ready, but the world is bigger than this town. He stopped rocking and excused himself and went inside to take his regular daily nap. Determination didn't know what to make of the comment. Yes I know the world is bigger than this town, but what did he mean by that? As he turned and left he seemed satisfied with the answer and soon he began his journey.

As the train slowly entered the train station Determination noticed the fast pace of the passengers hurrying to get to the exit doors and the train workers. This is nothing like back home he said to himself. People tend to be more laid back, easy going, and more friendly. Maybe the city people are different he thought. Determination had made reservations at the local hotel and thought he had to get there before dark which was setting quickly in. He again noticed people outside the station waving at cars as they passed by them. What are they doing he wondered? So let me try? When to his surprise, as he put up his hand a car stopped and asked where to buddy? Determination was puzzled where to he asked? Yes the cab driver said where are you going? He smiled and said to the Hotel Beverly. As the cab raced forward determination was taking in the sights. Bright lights everywhere he said. First time in the city the cab driver asked. Yes it is he replied. Beware the cab driver said people are mean. Oh no, Determination said they may be different but not mean. Just be careful the driver again said. Here you are at Hotel Beverly, that will be \$6.50. Determination paid the driver and gave him a tip. Thank you he said and drove off. As he entered the hotel, the doorman held the door open and tipped his hat. The check in desk is over in the corner he said. Thank you Determination said with a smile. Thinking all the time this is no different than his town where people were courteous and friendly. The desk clerk found Determination's room and he was handed a room key. Staying long sir. Just long enough Determination replied. Just long enough to study this city, it must have a lot of interesting things to see he asked. Here is a map and places

to see the clerk said. Thank you.

That evening Determination studied the maps and place to see, until he noticed a knock at the door. This startled Determination, who could this be he wondered. He looked through the door hole to see the bus boy. He opened the door to see the bus boy holding his luggage. The cab driver said you left them in his cab. Oh thank you he said. In my hurry I forgot my bag in the car. You are lucky the bus boy said usually they do not bring them back.

Thanking the bus boy Determination, returned to mapping out his study strategy to start out the next day. At first he discovered many exciting and interesting city habits. Weeks passed and Determination was getting more and more frustrated. He concluded that people in the service industry were polite only to receive tips. That most city dwellers were very rude, jealous, and not caring individuals. He became negative and withdrawn. He hated what the city took away from him and felt something was missing. How could he ever forgive them for taking away his positive attitude. Realizing now what the old gentleman of the town meant, that the world is more than this town. He decided to go back to the tiny town where there was order and comfort to his life to collect his thoughts. Frustrated, emotionally drained and full of hate he left the big city and vowed never to return. Was he right in his conclusions?

Can You Forgive?

Story of the burden of forgiveness.

Once there was born to a proud couple a set of twins. These were no ordinary twins. They were special. From birth they were inseparable. They were called forgive and forgiveness. Each child depended on each other.

As they were growing up their parents encouraged them to help people whenever they could. Never wait to be asked to do something she would say. Just do it. As the twins journeyed through life they met many obstructions along the way. People were not kind. They often ridiculed the twins and would insult them. But they would always remember their mother's words, when difficult situations occurred. Stay focused, everything will turn out all right.

Their lectures took them to a tiny town where Determination lived. The towns people did not like what became of the town treasure and invited the twins to talk to Determination. That evening as the twins walked into the town hall they saw Determination sitting in the back row with his arms crossed and a sad look on his face. All the towns people were there to see if the twins could free Determination from his peril. The twins began their lecture with a story:

"There once was an individual that had a friend. They did everything together. One day the friend found another friend and everyone seemed to be happy. They traveled around together enjoying each others company, they seemed to be best friends. Then one day the friendship seemed to end, jealousy, resentment, and bitterness set in. This anger lasted for years, it seemed to be miscommunication between the friends that was to be blamed for all this trouble. You see the twins said; resentment, bitterness and blame are all negative feelings and could be summed up as miscommunication."

Determination began to think maybe I am filled up with all this hatred that I cannot see correctly. I let these negative feelings erase my positive feelings not the city dwellers. The twins ended the lecture with this phrase: "Have no fear for what tomorrow may bring. The same loving God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. God will either shield you from suffering or give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations." The townspeople stood and cheered the twins for they felt that they cured their most prized treasure "Determination". Soon they all left the town hall with a good feeling. And what about Determination? Well, he stood there for awhile thinking about his next adventure.

Friendship

Two perfect flowers are a symbol of friendship. a bold concept...easily said, but so often misunderstood, difficult to sustain...prosper or grow.

Growth potential unlimited, nurtured by patience, understanding, teamwork and a burning desire to succeed.

Friendship a bond closely knitted by dreams, accomplishment and ideas, rarely destroyed from within.

Jealously its ultimate enemy, waiting, hovering, whispering, full of discontent, enjoyment, fulfillment surpassed only by achievements, caring its only companion.

Shared by each...enjoyed by few. Once found seldom lost... Each having a separate path, but share the same road, forever lasting...

From the beginning of time

From the beginning of time the wise old owl once said:

If not you...who?

If not now...when?

How Do I Get Here From There

In the beginning there was three paths. One path had five stones, the second had four, and the third had three. Each had their separate peculiarity. One evening as the sun slowly set over the three paths, a teacher and her student entered the crossroads. Here my student we will experience the meaning of life. Life is a journey only you can experience. Along these paths you will find character, self esteem, and confidence. Not all the stones are smooth. They can contain bumps, discouragement, and frustration. There can be sunshine or rain, good or bad times. Before we start this life journey, I can give you these traits my student, an attitude, choice, humor, memories, and hope. But at any point these traits may change according to your path experiences. I can also give you tools to combat these changes in disappointments you find along the way. These tools are compassion, courage and prayer. I can not tell you how to use them, only tell you of their importance. Remember although I am giving you attitude, it can be either positive or negative. Memories can be happy or sad. Hope can turn to despair. How you use these gifts I give you will determine your character, self esteem and confidence. Now let us journey to the crossroads where I will leave you. Your life's journey begins down anyone of those paths. Choose my student and your journey begins. I am afraid my teacher, what if I choose wrong. Remember my gifts, they will assist you in your choices. There is no wrong paths everything can be corrected if you will it. Now go enter the land of enlightenment, I am already in your memory.

Thinking back, he remembered what the teacher said: "There are no wrong choices." I will take the middle journey, the path of four stones. Beaming with encouragement, he entered the land of enlightenment. Soon the student meet a charming individual one that encouraged him and nurtured his self-esteem. The student would share his food and talked about the future. Each had their own separate goals. Both grew up and continued

their separate journeys. Years passed and the student crossed over to the path of three stones, here he continued a life in business. He always thought often of his childhood friend and wonder if their paths would ever pass. His career was moving quickly along and he was promoted frequently. However, his life did not seem complete.

His teacher's remarks remained in his thoughts. "Not all the stones are smooth." He felt he was missing something. Again he crossed over to the path of five stones. Here is where he thought he would find his complete life. His life continued and he was now in his middle thirties. Still searching for his childhood friend. One day, his company promoted him to a corporate office. This entailed him to move to the east coast. He pondered the move since he would have to stop his search. But this move would be a great career move. So he left and moved east. His career continued to move forward. He had wealth, confidence, self-esteem, and hope. These things produced a positive image which afforded him material wealth, happiness and laughter which he enjoyed. He seemed to have everything. His life made a difference, people enjoyed his company, he was successful in his career. Everything the teacher said he would have he had. All but one thing, he thought.

One evening while on a business dinner, he noticed over in a corner of the restaurant a slender female eating alone. He thought he recognized her but dismissed the thought. His meeting continued, and everything was going his way. Another successful meeting he thought. Soon the meeting broke up and he turned his attention to the corner of the restaurant. She was still there alone. He excused himself and made his way to the table. Excuse me he started, are you Sarah? Yes I am she replied. The joy in his face was very apparent. Why she said: do I know you? He sensed a feeling of negativity in her voice. And wondered if he should reply. Why not he thought? I believe you do he said. You were my best friend in grammar school before you moved away some years later. I often thought of you and began to search for you until my career moved me east. Why she asked? Because, I always felt you were my guardian angel always looking out for me. May I sit down? Please do she remarked.

Sorry about not recognizing you but my thoughts were somewhere else? I just lost my job to downsizing, my five year relationship ended and I learned today that I have cancer. Searching for words he could only come up with: "I'm sorry to hear that, can we get together sometime." She looked up in amazement, paused for a moment and replied sure. Well, here is my card I'm available almost anytime. Please call. Then he said goodbye and left, leaving her still alone at the table.

When he returned to his apartment, he thought about what had happened at the restaurant. Why did I say those things? My life was going great and hers was falling apart. Then he remembered the teacher's gifts of hope and compassion. That the forces of creation was both positive and negative. The next day he asked for a leave of absence and it was granted. He felt that he owed this person everything and felt he could assist in her recovery. He looked up her number and called. Sarah he began can I come over I got something to talk to you about. Sure she said and gave him her address. When he arrived he was surprised to see her apartment. It was plain in a lower end of town. He rang the doorbell and Sarah answered the door. He entered noticing she had not much furniture. Please come in she said. What did you want to talk about? Thinking for a moment he stopped looking around the room and said he took time off to help care for her. She was shocked and did not know what to say. Why was the only thing that came out of her mouth. Well, you gave me everything and I offered you nothing. That is not true she said. Don't let the appearance of this apartment fool you, I have wealth, maybe not material but spiritual and hope. You see even though my life is not complete until now, I never give up hope that you would find your way back into my life. The only thing I forgot was that I expected these things in my time. It should only be in God's time we expect things. However I never give up hoping and praying. My failed relationship was because I was hope for something that really was not there. It was you that I hoped for along.

Years passed and they both fell in love and were married. The student was very happy and remembered the teacher's prophecy that people are given certain gifts how they use those gifts is their choice. The road will have bumps along the way and those gifts will help you through. I wish I could say that they lived happily ever after but their lives were filled with disappointments, failures and lost opportunities. But they always remembered the teacher, and the traits, gifts that were given them. They never forgot GOD and still prayed to get them thru the tough times. Now the student understood what the teacher meant by you can get here from there Do You?

No matter which path you take or which stone you pick they are interchangeable and lead to the same destination if you use the traits and gifts you were given in life.

The Guardian Of The Kids

It was a bright sunny day. Clouds were moving slowly in the sky. Breeze blowing the flexible tree limbs gently against the window. It was a beautiful day. The stork said: "to the birds who were singing in the tree limbs below. Suddenly, the guardian of the kids was awakened with the ringing of the phone. He knew what that meant! As he placed the phone to his ear the voice on the line spoke softly and continued to talk.

Before the guardian had a chance to say a word, the voice asked: "Where do babies come from"? A blanket of quietness engulfed the room. In all the years I have been guardian that question was never asked, he thought to himself. Everyone knew where babies came from, or at least he thought so. They came from the guardian. That's me he muttered. The routine went like this:

- phone would ring
- questions about color, size and shape were taken
- a quick search through the records and finally the order was taken and placed.

Everything was neat and orderly. Delivery was usually within nine months. However he did remember when some were delivered a bit sooner. But, thinking back he never had to answer any questions quite as difficult as, "where do babies come from"? Remembering the phone call, he reached for his quick reference manual, which was always used in situations like this.

Looking up babies he found the usual, size, shape and color. But nothing on "Where babies come from"? Suddenly, he remembered, sometime ago when he was young, and was in his apprenticeship, a similar question was asked. Maybe not in the same phase but certainly in the same context. Surely, he would find it, since he never threw anything away. (against regulations you know.) After going through numerous volumes of order books he found a reference.

The excitement began to build, as he turned to the special order section found in the book. He quickly noticed the word; "stork" however, the remaining form was blank. "What does this mean?" Everyone knew that the stork was the chosen method of delivery. UPS, RPI, Federal Express and the Postal Service were all used in emergencies or customer requests. What did this have to do with, where do babies come from? Looking in the tree, he noticed the stork waiting for more deliveries. Confusion set in...Will, I ever find the answer, he said to himself. Shaking his head he began to close the book. When something fell out, which was hidden between the yellow pages. As he began to read the note, his smile quickly turned into a frown.

The surprise of where babies come from was soon brought to light. The note must have been placed there by his predecessor. How could they do this to me? Didn't I give them years of loyalty? Wasn't I always here to answer the phone, and take special orders? Looking at the note once more it read: Babies really didn't come from the guardian, they came from the love between two individuals. This had to be a mistake, he said. He sadly placed the note back between the yellow pages and returned to the phone. His voice quivered as he began to answer the question. Babies come from, he began, from two individuals in love. Just then the voice said: "I'll take two"! Twins the guardian said, yes the voice replied. The guardian frown turned quickly to a smile, as he reached for the blank order forms.

What color, shape and size would you like to order, he said excitedly? Are you familiar with our delivery schedule. Well we usually deliver within nine months after receipt of this order he added. As he placed the phone down, he returned to his chair. Maybe they need me after all, he thought. Then he leaned back in the soft chair, and waited patiently for the next phone order. At that moment his eyes began to close and he fell happily asleep...

How do you Know you have Friends?

Thinking back, while I was in hospital...I never knew I had friends. Yes I had people I would associate myself with, but I really never thought I had real friends. People would say: " Yes he is my friend". But how do you know real friendship? While in the hospital, the phone never stopped ringing, the gentlemen in the next bed asked one day: "Who are you"? To have so many phone calls. I guess, I never thought about it, could these be my friends? I would get calls from people I haven't heard from for years and who moved to other states. People wishing me the best and hoping I would recover soon.

What is real friendship? How do you know that you have real friends? Again questions, how would I know these people are my true friends? Then I received a poem written from my brother Rob, who lives in Florida. Reading the poem I finally realized what real friendship was all about.

His poem went like this:

The Count Begins

Never count your friends on sunny days,
for they all will be around.

Count your friends on the rainy days when
the clouds are gray and lightning shakes the ground.

It is then you painfully see the
type of friend they really are
When life delivers a sharp blow
do they stay and try to heal the scar?

The friends you count during
this storm are ones to commend
These people stood their ground
these people are labeled "True Friends"

When the rain finally stops
and your new day is here
It will be amazing that after a
violent storm a rainbow can appear.

Be careful not to begin your count
see what friends the rainbow can make
Remember these people are not true friends,
their loyalty is fake.

Keep sight of the friends that
remained when the rain poured down
Now begin your count of real friends

ones you know will always be around.

This poem brought light to my thinking, you can always say you have friends. You should consider yourself lucky if you can count on one hand true friends. After reading this poem again, I thought back...How many people can I count as friends? It was those people that thought of me during my stay, informed and comforted me. But be careful, some friends think of you during this bad time, however don't seem to care. These friends, can still be considered friends, even through they seem quiet and uncaring.

TO HAVE A FRIEND, YOU MUST BE A FRIEND. I have concluded that friendship is unconditional, they are there when you least expect them to be.

Ignorance

Ignorance

You heard it before, there's nothing new.
Ignorance is blind,
And has no conscience.
But if i'm not strong, and hope for change,
How can i expect you to.
You say i'm an optimist, and see good when only there
Is evil and injustice.
I have my moments and sometimes seem to quit.
But i must endeavor to persevere and stay true
To myself.
It sometimes seems a game, and like chess you learn
To play within its rules.
Happiness is that moment when everything seems
To go wrong, you must focus.
Suddenly someone notices and compliments you on a
Job well done.
It's that moment that it all seems worthwhile,
Hard work, dedication and teamwork.
Only to return to frustration and depression
Once again, when caring stops.
So you see there is good if only for a moment.
Your work, thoughts and deeds
Are once again your actions.
These are traits of valuable people.

The Miracle of Healing

The Adventures of Jonathan Applegate and his friend Pelly

Jonathan woke and reached for his glasses. Looking out the window he noticed the light blue sky with a touch of orange glow through the clouds. As he looked over to Pelly's make shift bed, he noticed Pelly seemed extremely tired... Pelly...Jonathan remarked, time to rise! Today is Sunday and we should be going to church. Look at the bright sun trying to poke its head out of the blue clouds. Pelly moved the blanket, glanced up and pulled the blanket over his head again. Pelly, Jonathan said: time to rise! This time Pelly noticing the tone of Jonathan's voice removed the blanket and rubbed his eyes. Pelly also remarked about the sun that left a glowing mark on his face, then both glanced through the window to view the beautiful day. Jonathan was excited to attend mass today for Oliver who was going through some tough times and he was interested in talking to him about healing. Jonathan entered the church without Pelly. Pelly was a household pet and pets were not allowed in church. That didn't bother Pelly, because he could hear just fine outside. Jonathan noticed the freshly cut flowers on the altar, the music playing and the choir singing. This is truly a beautiful day he remarked to the person next to him. The mass started and Jonathan, again heard the music playing, how relaxing. He remembered that he wasn't there for the music, he was there for the homily, mass and especially for his friend Oliver (Ollie as his friends called him). Since Jonathan was not paying attention to the surrounding he hadn't noticed that Father Jim wasn't in church.. Jonathan felt cheated, remorse and frustrated. Who is going to give the Homily? Jonathan thought it justifiable to leave since the sermon wasn't what he expected. Maybe I could get a copy of the homily from Fr. Jim? As the moment came close to the Homily, Jonathan began to drift. Deacon Peter approaches the podium ready to speak, he glanced over the crowd, then a moment of silence, browsing his notes, he began. For those people who seemed troubled, sick or hurting, there is wisdom in God's prayers, the homily started out. This was not what Jonathan came to hear. The next sentence soon caught Jonathan's ear. Healing comes in three stages: SPIRITUAL, MENTAL, PHYSICAL. People want things done now. When their special request is not granted through prayer, they feel frustrated . You should look toward prayer and scripture to find the answers. Any positive action is a gift from God. It might come as spiritual, mental or physical. Remember it's God's will that will be done. So keep praying if not today maybe tomorrow or the next day your request may be answered.

Let me start off with an example. Someone close to me was diagnosed with cancer. There were three things that helped him through the tough times.

- Stay positive- God gives everyone this gift so use it.
- Have hope and believe in miracles- Tough times don't last, tough people do...don't give up.
- Believe in your doctor-but ask question's...doctors are God's healing instrument on earth.

All things are difficult before they are easy. In his case, God sent a doctor to his side. This doctor examined him and confirmed the diagnosis that it was cancer. After extensive tests he identified the cancer and prescribed a treatment. During the next six months of chemo, he finally realized that his power was limited. He suggested additional treatment was needed that he could not offer. He contacted another doctor he formally worked with and she agreed to treat him. The new doctor was very thorough and compassionate. However, that is only part of the equation. Another is individuals must help themselves too. Most importantly prayer, God is always listening. Jonathan felt a lot better after the homily, and thought he had something to talk to Oliver about. As the mass ended he passed Deacon Peter and shook his hand and said he appeared disappointed at first but he learned a lot from the homily and thanked him.

Leaving the church he began to laugh, there was Pelly fast asleep next to the window. Come along Pelly, mass is over and you still have time to catch a nap. Jonathan thought about the homily and how he could relate it to Oliver. That night Jonathan went to visit Oliver, but he felt a little uneasy about what he wanted to talk about. Questions entered his mind. What if he is really sick and doesn't want visitors? What if he doesn't want to talk? These questions didn't stop Jonathan from ringing the door bell. Soon the door opened and Oliver was there to greet Jonathan. How are you today Jonathan he asked. Fine Oliver, went to mass today heard a great homily on healing. Me to Jonathan. Jonathan surprised since he didn't see Oliver in church. You first Oliver what did you think about the homily? Homily...what homily asked Oliver?

The homily presented by Deacon Peter. I'm sorry Jonathan I didn't hear that. Today I had a conversation with my doctor. She had a concern with a fever I recently had and was debating if she should continue with the treatment. We finally decided to continue. My remark to her was that the only direction we could take was this one. I suggested that God sent me to her and she was God's healing instrument. But whatever happens is going to happen, it's God's will. The only thing a patient should expect from their doctor is that they did everything

in their power for you. When people try to help by giving you suggestions on cures...remember your doctor is your best choice for answers. Now Jonathan what did you want to talk about? I guess you said it all Oliver. Well, Oliver I better be going Pelly is probably still sleeping and he has to get up soon. So they said they good-byes and would talk soon. Oliver closed the door, Jonathan remained outside for a moment still puzzled. How did Oliver get the message about healing but didn't go to church? Then he realized that the message in the homily talked about three types of healing and it seemed that Oliver was in tune with that sermon. Later that night Jonathan still couldn't figure it out about Oliver. So he picked up the phone and called. Oliver this is Jonathan. How did you know about the homily today? I didn't see you at church and you said you didn't know about the homily? Everything you talked about today seemed to fit the homily from Deacon Peter. Well, Jonathan where did you think Deacon Peter gets his ideas? Both laughed and hung up the phone.

The Mystery of the Missing Lap

The Adventures of Jonathan Applegate and his friend Pelly

Jonathan always started his day watching MSNBC. He watched world news, local weather forecasts, and caught up on the latest stock market updates. As he was watching the news, Pelly brought him the mail. Jonathan look a brochure, an interesting one, looks like an island paradise. Can we go Jonathan. Maybe, Oliver may want to go. Jonathan laughed and said: "let's look at the brochure first Pelly and then ask Oliver." Let's see, remote island paradise located just 33 miles from North Carolina, silky beaches, beautiful landscape, spacious condos and hours of fun in the sun. Well, Pelly seems like a fun vacation to me, let's call Oliver. As Pelly called Oliver, Jonathan began to make the plans for a two week vacation paradise. Pelly came running, more like waddling like he normal does. He was excited that Oliver was joining them on this vacation. Jonathan soon confirmed the reservations for three at this remote paradise with the travel agent. They were leaving in the morning. Time to get ready, Pelly. Pack only those things that will be necessary, not like last time when you had two extra bags. That night Pelly could not sleep, he was to excited about the trip. Jonathan he called, I just can't wait to get on that warm sunny beach. Jonathan of course didn't answer for he was fast asleep. Pelly rolled around in his make shift bed, dreaming of that island paradise. Daylight couldn't come too soon for Pelly. Morning arrived and Jonathan had to miss his morning show but that was just fine with him. Today, Pelly, Oliver and he were going on a well deserved vacation. As they drove up to Oliver 's driveway, he was standing there ready to go, it seemed he was excited too. Road trip Jonathan, hello Pelly excited about this trip I, see as he began to laugh. Well, do we have everything, yes they said: in an exciting gesture. We are off to the airport I guess. Hurry Jonathan, Pelly asked; I don't want to miss a thing. Fine Pelly but I don't want to get a speeding ticket. Everyone laughed, since they all felt they were going to have a great vacation. Soon they arrived at the airport, Pelly and Oliver unloaded the vehicle and Jonathan went to park the car. See you in a few minutes, remember Oliver report to gate 3 we are confirmed for flight 3456 on U.S. Air. Jonathan arrived to meet them at gate 3, just in time for boarding. Are we ready they said: to each other. The plane received their flight plans and were off. The Captain of the plane began to speak on the intercom , about flight destination and arrival time. The flight attendants were serving drinks and making the passengers comfortable. Looks like a start of a great trip from here, Jonathan thought to himself, as he looked back at Pelly and Oliver. The Captain again could be heard on the intercom, we are arriving in North Carolina in about three minutes, please raise all tables and fasten your seat belts and thank you for flying U.S. Air. As they arrived in the airport, Jonathan, Pelly and Oliver had to make a connecting flight to the island. Jonathan went to the information booth and inquired about the flight. Sir your flight is located at gate 17, you are confirmed and ready to board. Jonathan thanked the attendant and they all walked to board at gate 17. Soon they arrived on the island and the brochure was right, beautiful sandy beaches, sunny skies and large spacious condos. It was turning into a wonderful vacation. They checked into the condo and then began their vacation. What do we do first ? Pelly asked. Pelly headed right for the beach, since he loved water, Jonathan and Oliver soon followed. Their vacation was just wonderful. But too short, the days seemed to fly by. On the last day of their trip they decided to walk along the beach. Pelly waddled ahead and soon came to an interesting object half buried in the sand along the bush line. Hurry, Jonathan and Oliver look what I found. What is it Pelly, I don't know, it looks like a bottle but seems to be wood. Wait, there also seems to be something lodged in it. Let's see Pelly, what could it be in there? Oliver do you still carry your pocket knife? Here, Jonathan see what you could do with this. Look, it seems to be

some type of paper and it has a note attached. They took the object back to the condo to examine it. Jonathan went out to buy a magnifying glass because the words were too small to read. When he came back they attempted to read the small print but weren't able. Oliver remembered he had a friend in NYC that was a curator of a museum. Maybe he could look at the document and figure it out? Oliver went to make a phone call to his friend Christopher in NYC. As he began his conversation, Christopher was excited to hear from Oliver it seemed forever that they talked. Oliver explained what they found and asked Christopher if he will be able to examine it. Yes Oliver I will examine it. How will you get it to me? Well Chris do you remember Jonathan and Pelly, yes how are they? Great they are here with me in North Carolina. Jonathan is on the other phone making arrangements to fly into NYC tomorrow. Great I will meet you at the airport. Great talking to you Chris, same here Oliver, see you tomorrow. Well, guys we have a long day ahead of us tomorrow so let's get a good nights sleep and we'll be ready for our next adventure.

The next day they arrived at the airport, all their connecting flights were confirmed and they were to arrive in NYC sometime in the morning. Not enough O's in smooth, Pelly told Jonathan, great job Oliver said. Then they all began to laugh. As their last flight arrived in NYC, Christopher was waiting at the airport terminal. As they greeted each other, Christopher arranged for his vehicle to pick them up at location 31. As they approached the car, Christopher was interested in what they found. Tell me more about the object you found. Well, Pelly found it buried in the sand in a clump of bushes, it looked like wood, but it had something enclosed in it. Huh! Christopher said, seems old. We'll look at it, back at the museum. Arriving at the museum, Christopher gave them a little tour before heading back to the lab area. Fine museum you have here, Oliver stated. Have to spend more time here later.

Well, let me see that document. It sure looks old Oliver, but is really in good shape. Judging from these markings on this piece of wood it had to travel by water for a long time. It seems to be dated around 1750, who ever sent it knew what they were doing. The document tells a story about two groups of people living on an island somewhere north of Spain. As Christopher began to research the document, he was amazed by it's contents. Jonathan, Oliver and Pelly were waiting to see what they had found. Christopher started to put the pieces together as everyone waited for the results. Just a few more minutes and I will have it on the overhead. Pelly was waddling around with enthusiasm, I can't wait to see what we found Pelly told the crowd. Jonathan calmed Pelly down as Oliver looked over Christopher's shoulders. The tension began to build as Christopher put the document on the screen.

The document is a historical recording of a civilization that came to be when two different cultures merged together. It seemed that one culture was laid back and the other inventors. This document reads like this: There was a ship that was traveling to the new world, when a storm came up and blown them off course. Everyone, on board seemed worried and struggled to keep the ship from sinking. When one of the passengers noticed through the storm an island. Some of the crew gathered together and placed the emergency boats in the water for a quick get away. Some stayed on board since they thought it safer. The rest moved to the boats and rowed for shore. Soon after they reached shore some of them looked for the ship which wasn't far behind, when suddenly a bolt of lightning struck the ship and it burst in flames. It was feared that the twelve individuals remaining had died in the storm. Tired and hungry they searched for food and safety as they moved from the shore. Suddenly a group of natives appeared, who offered safety and food. The island people nursed them along until they were able to care for themselves. Humbled by the experience, the boat people gave thanks and prepared for the island people a celebration by inventing for them tables and chairs. They were a clever group and designed the gifts from trees and bark that was found in the forest. Time passed and the boat people grew tired of the grass hut they were staying in. They were inventors and needed to invent. The island people understood and the two parted ways, always keeping in touch with one another. Both cultures were similar in most ways and never wasted anything. But had one distinguishing difference. The island people would always eat sitting down with their food resting on their laps. They were a simple people and noticed that their laps would disappear after dining, giving them more storage area on the island for their art work. Whereas the boat people would sit at tables and chairs which they felt more comfortable since they were inventors. They did not understand each others customs but were able to respect each other. These two groups were soon to be known as Laplanders and Islandlanders. Soon the Islandlanders, built huge huts made of wood and bark and invented other items that were uncommon to the Laplanders. Still they honored each others customs. Years passed and the Islandlanders grew tired of the small island and needed more space and lots of it. So they began to build a ship and the Laplanders not familiar with this skill helped by decorating the ship with

fine art treasures that they were more familiar with. The ship was a great ship and both cultures knew that one day this would happen. All but one little girl who was known as Toplander. She got her name because she was so endowed. Toplander was very special she was able to adapt to both cultures. The children of both cultures treated her as royalty and shared their most precious gifts with her. She was able to learn quickly and was the connecting point of both groups. As the Islandlanders were ready to depart, they saw the disappointment in Toplander's eyes. What are you thinking they asked. I would like to stay here she said. So with remorse they left their most precious gift to the Laplanders, along with their invention of money, huts and road system. They both said their good-byes and the ship sailed slowly away. Years passed and Toplander invented many useful things for the Laplanders. Water delivery systems, sewers, toilets which she painted with bright colors. Each invention incorporated the best of both cultures which made the Laplanders appreciate her more each day. Something puzzled Toplander, each day as the Laplanders began to eat they ate on their laps. This was something Toplander thought she never had. From birth she was unable to see beyond her chest. This frustrated the Laplanders because they knew that she had one. They would try to tell her of her treasure but because she couldn't see it she would not believe she had one. Life went on and days passed. Soon the Laplanders grew fewer and fewer in number until one day the last Laplander perished. Toplander was very sad. She wandered the island each day to see the beauty they both created. The wooden huts were gone and road system was engulfed with wild bush and all remains of the Islandlanders disappeared but one treasure that of Toplander. She tried to keep the Island beautiful and she kept searching for her lap, but age was taking its toll. So before she was unable to keep up the pace, she wrote down the history of the island and the wonderful accomplishments they achieved. Invented a device to put the document in and tossed it in the water. Someday someone will find this and know that cultures can live together peacefully and share the best of both worlds. The island is deserted now but people who knew of the place still believe Toplander is wandering the island in search of her missing lap.

Last Chance

Meetings aren't simple when dealing with change.

It has been one month, since the last minority caucus. The sun was brightly shining as the Majority Journey-men gathered around the big table, waiting anxiously for the conference call. They were all ears, holding their breathes for any excuses the minority individuals would make for delaying their trip to their tiny kingdom. One Journeyman took the Noble Knights challenge to unite the team and schedule all flights, housing, and conference rooms for the visitors. This would save the king much gold and silver and take away any excuse of conflicts.

As they were gathered around the table waiting, there was a feeling that there was a mushroom hanging over their heads. Suddenly the phone rang and the word could you hold please was heard. What could this mean they asked themselves? The voice on the line said; we are waiting to connect with the tiny kingdom of two, would you care to wait? Then one Journeyman said; why not we always do! After ten to fifteen minutes of lost Kings gold and silver treasury funds the lines were connected everyone seemed to be available. The conference started as usual, the birds began to circle. Thoughts went through the Majority Journeyman's head, how would they try to back out of the trip down to our tiny kingdom? Then the dreaded words came out. The storyteller began, we first must take a commercial flight and that would cost us much gold and silver. Second our housing accommodations would also cost us much gold and silver. Thirdly, our conference room will cost us much gold and silver. This angered the Journeyman who made all the arrangements and figured out all the king's gold and silver and came up with a huge savings. Was this another smoke and mirrors trick of the storyteller to get out of traveling to the tiny kingdom? What part of the word FREE did they forget? Why add costs to trick the king into believing he was losing his gold and silver? As the Majority individuals began to exit the room to vent their anger, the voice of the storyteller could still be heard. What was he saying? How could this trip be any simpler? Then one Journeyman thought maybe we could push them out of the plane? This of course would save the king much gold and silver? But would it be cruel? Not any crueler then the unnecessary travel to their tiny kingdom. We are the Majority they thought and it cost much gold and silver to send us there. So if they are the minority why wouldn't it cost less for them to come to us? This conference call went on too long,

as the storyteller continued to talk and talk. Did the king know how much gold and silver he was losing on this simple conference call? It seemed that the storyteller was just throwing objects into the conference to delay their trip. Everything was a challenge. Nothing was simple. Finally the Journeymen wanted to put an end to this, so they asked if the call was ending and to summarize what was said? The summary was final the noble knight decided with the storyteller that the trip was only going to save the king very few gold and silver, but with the Majority that the trip will still be made to the tiny kingdom.

Everyone in the tiny kingdom was happy. However that may not be said for the kingdom of two or the minority kingdoms. But what said was said and the king would be happy and the noble knight was happy all but the storyteller who was probably still talking as the call ended. A letter was soon sent to verify the conference call and a reply was necessary to verify to the king that everything was finalized. Everyone had to respond for the trip to be binding.

Soon one lonely Journeyman from the Majority kingdom said that he would not be available to attend, since he was taking his family on vacation to the minority kingdom. Just joking as he signed off! Just joking!!! Then an e-mail appeared on his screen: "You are a funny man"?

Doctors, Lawyers, Native Americans

Who can you Trust?

The day begins as the clouds covered the brightly shining sun. It was 8:50 A.M. minutes before the trial of the century was to start. People were lined up outside the courtroom waiting to catch a glimpse of the defendants. The well-dressed lawyers entered the courtroom from a side entrance to avoid the crowd. Their confidence was seen in their eyes as they walked into the room. Soon came the Doctors, still in their white coats, weary from the long hours they put in the night before. Lastly the Native Americans dressed in their ceremonial outfits along with feather headdress entered through the crowd. All the defendants were seated at the same table. The lawyers pushed the doctors and native Americans to the far end of the table. Thus giving them more room for their formal beliefs. When the clock struck 9:00 A.M the crowd rushed the door, trying to find seats. Soon, a voice rang out, all rise for Judge Patients! As the Judge entered the courtroom you could hear the lawyers snickering with approval. We got this in the bag one lawyer said.

As the judge sat down, one arrogant lawyer quickly stood up . Your honor he started "this case is purely circumstantial." . How do you know? replied the judge. On what grounds are we brought here, the arrogant lawyer proceeded. On the grounds of judgment day the judge replied? Now sit down! Now the lawyers felt betrayed . How could a member of the board refuse to dismiss a case like this one. Why all the questions and what kind of judgment did the judge mean?

This is a case of trust the judge began. We have gathered you together to discuss the meaning of trust and to whom does your trust go? Again the arrogant lawyers felt confident, since this was their arena. All those years of training and trial briefs, made them experts in the use of buzzwords. This was the keys of their trade. Let us proceed the judge ordered. Doctor what is the meaning of trust and why do you feel that you have earned it. The Doctor slowly stood up and began to speak. Trust comes in the form of hard work and dedication. Long hours of study and patient's willingness to put their lives in your hands. Our constant endeavor to keep abreast of the new changes and medical breakthroughs that benefit our patients. Trust is the feeling a person gives you after you have earned it. It is something that can be taken away, it belongs to the individual and cannot be bought by Doctors. Is that all Doctor, the judge replied? I guess so the Doctor said. OK you can step down now. Let us hear from the Native American the judge said. Will you take the stand? The old proud Chief had many years on him, and had seen and experienced many adventures in his long life. When the judge asked him the question he was neither surprised or excited. Your honor he said. I have lived a long life and seen a lot. Trust is what you give in good faith to acquire something. During my youth, the blue coats often promised great opportunity if we would move from our ancestral lands. We gave them trust to acquire such opportunity. I have learned that trust can not be written or handed down from generation to generation. It is a learning experience

that can only be felt by individuals. Sometimes, trust is a one way street. It can be shared but often it is not. It is different from individual to individual. It can leave a bitter taste in your spirit if misused. Written papers can not hold trust, people do. It is a contract between people. I believe that is all your honor. OK, you can step down. Finally, the lawyers who have been waiting all day to show off their talent asked permission to approach the bench. Your honor they said. These are our beliefs on Trust and what trust means to the lawyers profession. You will see that all the beliefs are in order and you can make a ruling on them. As they presented them to the judge, she took a quick look at them. The arrogant lawyers felt they have far exceeded the judges trust and began to celebrate. To their amazement the judge ordered the beliefs thrown in the trash can. And summoned the lawyers to the stand. How could this be, everything was in order? They spent hours discussing, preparing and typing them. Everything was perfect. Now the judge asked what did the beliefs mean and say? The lead lawyer who was the most arrogant began his discussion as follows: These beliefs show without a shadow of doubt that trust is a monetary amount. We lawyers get paid for what we know and present. Our clients get the best defense for their money. Wait the judge said. " Do you mean that trust is money?" Well, the client is paying for a service and they trust us to perform. So, I guess money equals trust, the lead lawyer said. Do you also mean that if a client is guilty and you get them off on a technical motion is that also trust? Everyone is innocent until proven guilty, your honor. Justice is blind the lead lawyer said. What we do is provide a service. We act in accordance to the law. At this point the lawyers felt they had the judge. Their strategy was working and they felt more confident now than ever before. Unfortunately for them the judge held the final card. You may leave the stand the judge ordered, I have heard enough. As the lead lawyer went back to the table the rest of the lawyers grinned with glee. We have done it, this is a cut and dry case. We have won!

The crowd was anxiously waiting to hear what the judge had decided. They felt that the true meaning of trust was portrayed by the Doctor and Native American but that the lawyers had the law on their side. The judge asked for the court papers. You see gentlemen, when I ask the question what is the meaning of trust and why do you feel that you have earned it. As the good doctor said trust is something that is earned and can be taken away, never once did she mention money. The Native American saw trust as an individual thing, never mentioning money. But you gentlemen mentioned money as the equal of trust. How could someone trust you to defend them if money is the only means of trust. We have found here that trust is different for all people. Trust is intangible. Does the crowd have a verdict? Who do you trust? The crowd went silent as the three defendants left the courtroom. Each pondering the question the judge just asked. Looking at each other the crowd slowly, left the building taking with them the meaning of trust...

Pirate Adventure

The morning sun's rays fall softly on the morning dew, creating a rainbow of bright colors, that reflected gently into Jonathan's window. The beams touched him softly on his face. Turning to avoid the rays, he rubs his eyes and suddenly awakes to his mother's voice. "Jonathan! Jonathan Applegate! Time to wake up. You will be late for school if you do not hurry up. You still have to wash your face and hands, and do not forget to brush your teeth.

The voice stopped and Jonathan replied. Oh...Mom! You know we have no school today! Today is Saturday. His mother laughed, and you could see she was embarrassed. To cover it up, she said: "sorry dear I forgot." Climbing from the bed Jonathan stopped by the brightly filled window. Looking out he notices the ocean blue sky and the puffy ship-like clouds. Just then his mother unexpectedly enters the room. Jonathan! What are you doing by the window? Look mom, see the white clouds, aren't they pretty. Oh yes Jonathan, they are indeed. That one looks like a pirate's ship. Jonathan pauses and says. "Mom would you read me a story. Only for a minute, then I'll have to go to the store. What book do you want me to read today, his mother asked? The one about the pirates, that's my favorite one. As his mother began reading, Jonathan slowly drifted toward the window. "His mind began to wander."

- Are those pirates waving at me?
- I wonder if they will give me a ride?
- It seems as if they are sending a small boat for me.

Jonathan became excited! At last he could travel all over the world...exploring caves...seeing new lands... and meeting new people. That will be fun!!! Jonathan's eyes became bigger and bigger as the small boat came closer and closer. With a short wave of his hand, the captain summoned Jonathan aboard the large sailing vessel.

Leaping onto the ship Jonathan felt his adventure beginning. Aye-Aye matey, what do we call you, the Captain asked in a harsh voice. My name is Jonathan! Jonathan Applegate! He replied with pride. Well, Jonathan, if you want to be a pirate you must act like a pirate. I would if I knew what a pirate should act like? He replied bravely...us pirates are mean, we steal from people and burn their ships! That's terrible, shouted Jonathan. Why must you be mean and steal from people and burn their ships? The pirate Captain looked puzzled, he never had anybody talk back to him before. Lost for words he replied: Well, as he looked around, it's what pirates do that's all. They do not know anything else. Besides isn't that what you wanted to be Jonathan?

Jonathan could not accept that answer. Although he wanted to be a pirate, he knew the difference between right and wrong. What he heard from the Captain was wrong. No matter what he said he could not persuade the pirates to change their bad habits. He knew that he was too small and them too many. However that did not stop him from trying. He had a plan. Somehow he would try to win them over...but how?

Remaining on the deck to think, he noticed the sun slowly sinking into the water. Oh my he said! Where is the sun going? Why is it sinking into the water? Will it return tomorrow? His questions were heard by one lonely sailor who remained on deck with him. He began to laugh! How come you do not know about the sun? Jonathan sadly looked up! Because I live on land? Then why are you on this ship the sailor asked? Well, I always wanted to be a pirate! I thought that it would be fun to travel around the world and meet new people and see new lands. I am not like them...I am not mean...I cannot burn boats...and I will not steal from people. Cause stealing is bad...Are all pirates bad? Jonathan quickly added. No! replied the sailor. As you could see Jonathan things are not as easy as they seem. You must remember never try to be something you are not. JUST BE YOURSELF...

Suddenly Jonathan heard his mother's voice. "And the ship finally docks and the pirates drop off their precious cargo." Well, Jonathan how did you like the story? Looking down at the book, Jonathan noticed the pirate waving. Jonathan...did you hear me. How did you like the book? Fine mom. Maybe tomorrow we could read something else?

Leaning over his mother hugged and kissed him on the forehead. Leaving the room she said: See you later Jonathan. Jonathan smiled, turned and grabbed his book. Looking at the pirate he waves and says goodbye to the only friend he had on-board. If I need a friend I know where I could find one, he said. The pirate winked and Jonathan closed the book. He learned a valuable lesson:

- Things are not really what they seem to be!
- Never try to be something you're not?

BE YOURSELF!!! IT'S EASIER!!!

Positive Thinking

When the chips seem to be down

And there doesn't look like any relief is around

YOU NEED POSITIVE THINKING!!!

Rules

Rules

Often cursed

sometimes broken

Used for control

protection and caring

Begins with a word

and then blossoms

Gains power

loses insight

Used by many

accepted by few but forever faithful

Only to appear when needed.