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Spoonin' Smiles

I LEARNED ABOUT SPOONIN' during my Air Force tour in Texas and long before I became engaged to my Sweetie of now... 42 years.

I had joined a club called The Good Sports Club. It was a companion club to a wheel chair club. We sporters helped the wheel chair youth get around. They taught me to balance a wheel chair on the two large back wheels. I never did find a use for that skill in my panorama of professions in all the years that followed. It did, however, bring a smile or two from those I had demonstrated my 'skill.'

Not knowing exactly what to expect, I invited 'Miss Peaches 'n Cream' on a date to an ice cream social that one of the church associations was having at Gazebo Park. My date calendar never seemed to have any entries so I looked forward to the occasion with careful planning.

The evening's weather was perfect and I had no problems finding suitable parking. The crowd was already gathering with lots of excitement. I removed the heavy chair from the back seat and locked it in place near her door. I opened the door and lifted her into the chair. It was then I remembered dad telling me long ago to 'never date a girl bigger than I was' <grin>.

Peaches had one of those bone-deep smiles. There is no way that facial exercises and cosmetics could build something that refreshing. Deeper than the hint of powder, polish, and perfume was a smile that persisted even through the pain and disappointments of life.

We both began eating our ice cream with little wooden spoons as two spotlights directed our attention to the platform of three seated musicians. A fourth was standing with one foot on top of a washtub 'base fiddle'. One of the seated musicians began making music with a washboard like I once saw mom scrub grass-stains from my little pants long long ago.

The second spotlight lit up the remaining two performers. They were both working up a sweat playing the spoons against anything within reach, even each other. As they both broke into ear-to-ear grins everyone else applauded and started laughing. They had used some kind of black wax over their front teeth that put you in mind of a seven-ten split at your favorite bowling alley. Later we learned that three of the musicians were pastors of local churches.

In the midst of all the fun and laughter I saw powerful contrasts of smiles that memorable evening. In front of me were the painted-on smiles of the spooners. And then I was in a crowd of people that were part time smilers, at best. But it took a wheel chair to teach this lonely soldier, thousands of miles from home, what a real smile can do.

The challenges God has allowed into lives like yours or the person near you could easily sprout sadness, and in some, terror. Your circumstances might be so painful you couldn't put them into words to share with a friend. As you open your heart's door to His comfort, tell Him you know He is in control... just a smile to Him will do.

John 15 is one of the many great love and joy chapters in your Bible and mine. In verse 11 Jesus says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

The highest purpose of smiles is not to put on a show or a false expression to hide behind. It is the outpouring of God's promises that are trusted in and applied to the Christian's life.

I don't feel qualified to someday hear my Savior's "well done thou good and faithful servant". But how I long to see His smile that once held up a Crown of Thorns for me and for you.
OH HAPPY DAY!

(end of story)

Questions Are Not Bad

[Theme: Satan's lie says we must "Have all the answers" before launching out. But the Bible reminds us over and over that FAITH and preparedness brings the harvest of souls.]

"Answer the next question wrong and I'm dead!! I can't believe it, so much hangs on how I respond..."

Trina Gilton was sitting on the ground, straight backed, with her eyes squinting, all primed to meet the final question head-on. Trina's dad, Jerry, came walking out the back door and spied his 14-year-old daughter with her best friend. Both girls were sitting Indian fashion facing each other. "What's up girls?" "OH! Hi dad! Judy and I are practicing for our office word-processing test coming up Friday. We made up a question game on the computer to help us, and I think I'm dead." The I-don't-understand look on Jerry's face, prompted Judy to explain. "Mr. Gilton, I get to ask Trina one more computer question and if she's wrong, I get to hose her down for five whole minutes... and I can hardly wait!!" A short time later....

"Supper's ready! Come set the table!" "My wife should have been an umpire with a voice like that," thought Jerry rounding the corner. With his first step into the kitchen, he saw wet hair... "Why, Trina, did it start raining outside?" "Dad, I don't need any more questions, and you can wipe that silly grin off your face." "Yessss mam!" Jerry said, as he saluted and got the syrup out of the refrigerator.

As the last waffle disappeared, Trina said, "Actually, I don't mind when Judy asks a question I can't answer. It tells me what I need to go back and brush up on." Mrs. Gilton could have gotten a gold star when she popped in with, "Pastor told us in Teacher Training it's good to have sincere questions from your students -- it shows they are paying attention and indicates what areas you need to explain further. Oh, and he also said, 'a good teacher can sort-of put on the mind of the student and anticipate some of the questions and prepare for them in case they're asked.'"

Deep down, Jerry appreciated the topic of discussion, because he had wanted to witness to a buddy that he car-pooled with, but thought that he would drop dead if the guy asked a Bible question that he couldn't answer. "You know," Jerry thought, "saying I don't know to a question really isn't all that bad, if I follow it with, 'I'll dig out the answer tonight and let you know tomorrow'.... By the way Jake, I have a couple of things jotted down here that I want to show you, and these I do know for sure."

Jerry's finger covered up the bottom of the note that said:

"The Roman Road --- Handle with prayer...."

(end of story)

NO, THEY'RE NOT RAT KILLERS!!

**"DADDY ! DADDY ! LOOK ! LOOK !
They're stuffing men in little yellow boxes
and selling them for \$2.38!"**

Frank Hicks lowered his newspaper and from his 'rest-your-weary-bones' easy chair, looked to see what his precious six year old, Kimmy, was talking about...

As soon as he laid down his newspaper, and recognized the program Kimmy had been watching, Frank had to really force himself not to burst into laughter. He reached down and picked up his precious little one, noticing the pretty pink ribbon Nancy had put in Kimmy's hair, just for a special surprise for daddy when he got home from work.

"But daddy. Brother Jacobs told me and the other kids in junior church, about Jimmy Farner's daddy and Bruce's daddy and how important they were in the church and that we should obey them because pastor Hammond calls them d-cons! And daddy, that man on the TV said they put deacons in this yellow box. And we're supposed to put that yellow box in the corner of the basement and the deacons will kill the rats for us!"

Wondering how to straighten out this confusion in a little mind, Frank thought it more than coincidence, when he remembered a verse from this morning's devotions. "Kimmy... See here in daddy's bible, it says 'and the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him'(Gen 2)." As the shadows across the floor got longer and longer, Frank cited example after example, to Kimmy of his wife Nancy's dedication to the needs of the whole family, oftentimes above her own.

The knitting needles in Nancy's hands quickened their pace and she got one of those smiles that says 'he-does-notice-things-around-here-besides-the-lawnmower-needin'-somethin'. (But that's a story for another time.)

Frank began to help Kimmy to see that it was God's Plan that the man be in charge of the family, but warned the man that it couldn't function without mommy's efforts. It was important that the head of the house strengthen his helper so that her efforts would be significant.

'Kim... Do you remember about two months ago, when you had your tonsils out at the hospital?' "Uh-huh" "Bruce's daddy came and visited you, didn't he? It's just not possible for pastor Hammond to get around and see all the people in the church as often as he wants to, and a lot of important things wouldn't get done if it weren't for God making deacons to be a part of our church. I'll tell you another thing.... What they do is so important the bible even tells how they're supposed to act at church and home too!"

"Well daddy, I understand now why we always remember to pray for mommy every day and for all the important things she does, but shouldn't we also pray for Jimmy's and Bruce's daddys every day too?" Nancy spoke up just then and reminded her husband and the little one on his lap, that Paul, Ashley, and Kris had daddy's that are getting some special training so they can be the best helpers to the pastor they can be....

As only loving little children can do, Kimmy said, "boy I'm going to remember the deacons in my prayers every day".

Are you praying for them too?"

(end of story)

The Little Red Wagon Lesson

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOME FOLKS! Some people can't imagine there was ever a time when Christmas toys needed no batteries or computers to make them work, but there was. And not so long ago.

The very instant I saw that beautiful wagon in the store window, I knew I HAD TO HAVE IT! You would have thought so too. Even at 8 years old, I feasted on every feature; every gleaming facet of that bright red Radio Flyer.

The red was so strong you'd have thought you could hold your hands up close and get them warmed. And was it ever heavy duty? I figured I could haul mom's refrigerator in it, or at least dad's big tool box. Those white wheels would undoubtedly take me down a hill as fast as a fighter airplane. This was definitely a MUST HAVE Christmas gift, that made any other gifts not worth talking about.

To every one that needed to know, I made it very clear what was my one and only choice for this Christmas. I won't admit that I became fanatical it, but knowing there would be no Radio Flyer with my name on it at Christmas time would spell catastrophe.

At a very young age I developed strong detective skills. I had learned that mom and dad would hide my gifts at our neighbor's, so they'd have a fighting chance of me not uncovering them. My detective drive pushed me to invite myself over to 'play' with the neighbor kids. 'Course my urging led us to play games down in their basement. This shrewd move allowed me to look out of the corner of my eye to see if I could spot my Radio Flyer I would be given on Christmas morning.

Each time I visited my playmate's basement, I saw nothing that looked like my flyer. Christmas morning came closer and closer... still nothing. I would mention my Christmas choice to mom more than once. This was going to be TERRIBLE! I wanted to jump in my bunk bed and keep the covers over my head until Christmas was over. Ohhhh the pain of it all. I had asked for only one thing; not a toy box full of stuff. How could mom and dad say they loved me so much and deprive me of this one simple thing that I had my heart set on?

On Christmas morning, my big brother headed down the stairs from our 2nd floor bedroom. I trudged along behind him with no desire to look under the tree at all. Bob peeked around the corner in the direction of the tree and gifts. "Jimmy. You've got to look. You're not going to believe this," he said to me.

Expecting the brutal pain to my hopes and heart, my eyes caught the sight of the angel on the top of the tree. My eyes shot to the gifts below the tree and sure enough... no...Radio...Flyer. There was, however, a two-wheeled bicycle among the gifts that struck me as being a bit too small for my brother.

Not sure what was going on, I checked the tag identifying who the gift was for. My eyes read the words, "To: Jimmy." The flood of tears prevented me from reading the rest of my name on the tag. Using both sleeves, I tried to keep both eyes dry enough to see the colorful streamers hanging from the handle grips. "WOW!" The handlebar basket was big enough to hold my basketball and even baseball glove. The tires were real ones that you pump up just like dad's car tires. Since that bicycle Christmas, I have celebrated fifty more gift-giving holidays. I relish telling it over and over. Each time I do, I'm reminded of my loving parents who knew what I'd enjoy even more than I did.

How I wished that even at that early age, I would have trusted the choices and love of my parents.

In case your heart is about to break with disappointments now or soon, it would be well for you to take a lesson from the True Giver of gifts as taught in Luke 11:10+

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

(end of story)

WEE DEMSUN STOR YOU OWN!

Katie's vehicle pulled up beside a store, of sorts, that should have been set fire to, a long time ago. This lady we watch, is having much difficulty keeping in position one of those large frilly hats you always see worn by a "southern belle". The noise her shoes make as she walks, set you to thinking she was breaking in a new pair of high heels or never worn them before. All of this would probably go unnoticed by anybody else besides you and I because this store is in a basement. If you really want to know the truth, no one makes high heeled shoes that will fit four year old Katie. Now, you may have guessed, the "store" once protected Peterson's new refrigerator, but that's all unimportant at this point. However, what is important is what Katie holds, by a lacy little glove guaranteed to melt any daddy's heart. With Katie's tight grip on her stamp -k()()W~i~ wrestles that big hat through the raggedy cardboard door. It's really a struggle to read the letters above the door that Katie just disappeared into, but they should have spelled:

"REDEMPTION STAMP STORE"

How refreshing it is, to see the simplistic way that small children look at life. To be real honest about it, I've many times thought I'd like to have a "WEE DEMSON STOR" all my own. But since I never had very many trading stamps, I'd want to use something

else something I had allot of. That way I could make many more trips to get gifts I like. Let's see what do I have the most of⁹ Problems...

That's it! I'll create a REDEMPTION STORE that uses problems instead of S & H Green stamps!!

Sounds silly doesn't it!?

Before you answer, better **read II Corinthians 4:17**.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

"...our light affliction..." are my problems that I want to trade in. ...worketh for us... is the redemption store or swapping place. Now the key words are the last two "...of glory." These words speak of the Owner of the store. He is the one that gave real and lasting meaning to the word redemption. But what is as real as any knowledge I'll ever reach for, is that This Redeemer changes lives in a way the world can't understand. The day to day behavior of these that have been redeemed, baffles the world because of the inward assurance of the once for all time, acceptance of a repenting heart. He shed His blood on a cross on a hill I may never see, according to prophecy, trading my sins for His righteousness; His acceptance by God the Father.

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO REDEEM SINS FOR NEW LIFE?

(end of story)

You Can Do What Computers Cannot

[Theme: The Missions computer has none of the important ingredients for missions.]

The robot sat at the table reading the Bible. Its binocular vision scanned each page and instantly committed every word and period to its memory banks without error. Every five seconds or so, high-pitched motors would start up and the robot would turn the page. The flashes of yellow rays from the eyes were scanning two pages in less than the five seconds. The process repeated itself over and over.

What a masterpiece of machinery and intelligence. Anyone would like to have this robot to help him or her with studying their homework or reading the newspaper. Occasionally the mechanical thing gave what Ben thought was a mechanical hic-up. He held his breath to see what would happen next. Each time it continued on again. Whew.

Ben picked up the infrared remote control and pressed pause... the robot stopped dead. He then took a few minutes pressing many program buttons on the remote to complete the fix. As a troubleshooting technique, Ben had programmed the computerized robot to stop the next time it did it's "hic-up" so he could see what was causing the problem.

Ben could never have guessed what was causing the problem. It was tears. Tears were causing the robotic scanning problems.

The way Ben figured it out was that the program told him where the scanning process had stopped at. On the page of his grandfather's old Bible, Ben saw there was a TEAR STAIN on the page.

Just then Tommy paused in writing his "Ben and Robot" story you've just been reading. He stopped to contemplate the contrast of the tearstain and this piece of technology that looked like a person. He really hadn't thought the whole story through before he started typing it. But the more he thought about it, the more it intrigued him. People today are so impressed with technology and all it can do here and in space. But his mind kept going back to that tearstain. No matter how good the vision of a computer is, there are never any tears involved. And the thought of his grandfather's tears in his Bible really grabbed at his heart.

Ben added a few more paragraphs to his Ben and Robot story and left the story for a few days.

The sermon Tommy heard the next Sunday really drove the tear stains deep when his pastor's message included the missions verse,

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Psalms126:5,6:

Only a human sitting at the keyboard can possess the burden, compassion, love and imagination God wants to employ in His Great Commission; never any technology in any form can know and savor the joy of God's wonderful grace demonstrated on Calvary.

(end of story)

Sewing Machine Lifesaver

I'm trapped! I'm in a cage and can't get out! Lois sat in front of her machine in high school sewing class. For two weeks now, she and her class were learning to sew pockets on pants, dresses, and shirts. They learned to use all types of thread and material and which was best for what kinds of uses. But she thought she would go mad.

Lois ached within herself to do something important. Though her hands would position the material, and carefully guide it through the sewing machine, she felt so useless, so insignificant. Her mind would continually place her in important jobs like writing speeches for famous people, helping a scientist invent a new medicine, or create a gown to be worn by some movie star.

But the last couple nights were worse yet. After bedtime prayer she had wept hoping to get some relief from the feelings of "I'm a nobody that can sew pockets." On Saturday, at her mom's request, Lois took her younger brother Timmy to the science museum to see some new exhibits he needed to look at for a school report.

The most popular exhibit was a person wearing one of the actual space suits worn on one of Apollo moon landings. His helper explained the purpose of all the many hoses, fixtures, and valves to the children as Lois stood back and watched all the attention. The children got down on their knees to better see something the helper was describing about the suit that was below the backpack. Lois moved in closer to listen.

The helper said, "See that little pocket? It isn't used for anything anymore but it is still attached to every new suit that is crafted. And children, know what? If that pocket isn't sewn on with the greatest of care, the suit will loose pressure during a space walk and kill the astronaut. That astronaut's life depends on the best efforts of someone with a sewing machine he or she has never seen, or the work that was done." Lois pulled out a handkerchief and headed for a dark corner before anyone saw her tears. In sewing class could she ever have imagined that a pocket could save a life?

The whole matter of insignificance was reinforced two weeks later when Lois' youth pastor shared a message from Matthew 25. The message included the parable of the talents. The weight in Lois' heart was lifted when she heard the pastor read, "thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Two verses later the same statement was made to another faithful steward. Even at that moment she thanked God for the comfort that comes from knowing she is saved and from scripture showing us how we can have joy.

Just after bedtime prayer that night, she pictured herself sewing a pocket on the robe of her Savior, Jesus Christ. How important that would be. Serving God with her talents. But she knew the job was not finished. In this picture, Lois took her heart and placed it in the pocket of the Lord's robe.

Will your sewing machine make pockets?

(end of story)

Sidecar For a Unicycle

LITTLE JIMMY AND HIS TRICYCLE ARE GONE! Mom was distraught beyond words. In one direction from our house was the deep swift river with no guard fences. In the other was Portage Blvd., the busiest 4-lane street in town.

A bicycle story, be it truth or tale, can take you in almost any direction, often filled with danger and doubt.

Mom and dad found me pedaling my tricycle down the marbled school hallway. My quest was just. Every boy needs to see where his big brother goes to high school, doesn't he? How I got across Portage Blvd., only God knows. Even a little fella knows that if you have a Portage Blvd. in your path... God knows.

Only good bicycle stories include a little red wagon. What a Christmas it would be. I had made it very clear to everyone that my heart's desire was to have a Radio Flyer wagon that glistened redder than a real fire truck. It required two strong axles for my heavy loads of toys and treasures. I'd be the envy of all my friends. But there was a surprise in my future far beyond what real rubber tires could carry.

Peering around the corner toward the many presents, I saw two tires, not the four I requested. Never was there a bicycle that sparkled more brightly than the stars or handlebar streamers longer than a comet's tail. I learned that morning so long ago the lesson I'll take to heaven. More than my wants or dreams, my mother and father know what's best for this growing heart.

Now are you counting down? We started with three wheels and then two. Well... Over 40 years ago I owned a unicycle with the skinniest seat you ever sat on. I met this pretty thing I wanted to ride with for many years to come. The problem was that I didn't know how to mount a sidecar on my unicycle.

The chromed unicycle was happily traded for a bicycle built for two (or so I thought.) God later blessed us with Pamela to ride on the seat above the rear wheel. Baby Jeffy was laced into my backpack, papoose style. Boy did my seat get hard after a couple miles.

The bicycle episode I love to share with others happened before I entered junior high school. My friends and I would fold the end of a playing card and clip it onto our bicycle frame with a clothespin. When it was adjusted correctly, it sounded like a motorcycle engine as you pedaled. Right after a good rain, and the sun came out, my three biking buddies and I met and decided we were going to ride a few blocks down, to where the rainbow touched the ground and we would collect the pot of gold and split it four ways.

Even after we traveled two blocks, we realized someone kept moving the rainbow and our gold. At the end of four blocks, we knew we were outmatched by others that probably had a rocket ship for the trip and the gold.

Now be honest with yourself. Have you ever struggled toward your pot of gold? Did you realize someone kept moving it? What do you see when you look at a rainbow? Do you see the dazzling colors of the rainbow watercolors? Do you somehow thirst for the gold beneath it? Travel with me to see a bow in the sky with gold beneath.

We page not pedal, to the last book of the Bible. In Revelation chapter four describes a rainbow set above a throne of gold. The truth this story delivers us to, is the One called Truth. He is the creator bicycles, raindrops, dreams, and a future beyond this world's cares and chaos. Vehicles of any description are not needed. He has come to you. He knows where you live. Would you open your heart's door to the Giver of light and life? No pedaling required.

(end of story)

Smiling Fingers

[Note: Seldom do we thank our church's accompanists beyond a casual word on the fly. Instead, we must encourage them to continue with their often-used skills with the choir and those of us who think we read music. We dedicate this little story to their seemingly untiring efforts.]

With so many watching, little Didi was ever so careful to hold the hymnal pages in place but was captivated with the other pair of hands that moved so gracefully over the keys. Little Didi also had for her month of hymn-helping; the "responsibility" to count all the "blood" and "Bible" words, as they'd appear in the hymns that were played.

But those captivating fingers.... Didi decided an appropriate name for them would be Smiling Fingers. Yes, it had to be Smiling Fingers because every time they played, and Didi looked up, the worshippers in the little country church wore big smiles and seemed to forget their troubles for a time; joining in praises to the Lord. Little Didi felt kind-of important in doing her part because the pastor would start his message with all the people smiling.

Before service, one Sunday, Mrs. "Smiling Fingers" used some phrases from an old-favorite gospel hymn to help explain to her little helper that Jesus loves little hands, especially ones that have trusted Him as their Savior. The word counting responsibility was just a bit of reinforcement of foundational pieces of the Gospel message.

Didi's desire more than anything, was to acquire her own smiling fingers and be able to use them at home. How smiles were lacking at home. Daddy just splits wood all day long in the back yard with stooped shoulders and a "what's-the-use" long face. That started just after the coalmine her daddy worked at, closed down. The ribbon in mamma's hair disappeared about the same time the smiles did.

The next month's hymn-helper was Shawna... A camcorder was definitely needed a few weeks after Shawna began her month tour with Mrs. "Smiling Fingers." At an after service "Linger-Longer" (down-home name for a pot luck dinner) it was easy to hear someone playing the piano in a way only small children trying to imitate an adult, can do.

The scene to be forever cherished was Shawna holding a hymnal open with one little hand, and pretending she had smiling fingers with the other hand. "Benny! You get up here this instant and start counting the bloods and Bible's like you're supposed to," she chided.

Now her little brother Benny, still in three-cornered pants having just mastered crawling figured he'd concentrate on the pedals for now. Why not? No bloods and Bibles to count down here!

Pastor Jeff was taken back a bit seeing the Shawna-Benny duet. His lessons on 'discipleship in all things' was manifested by a brother and sister not even knowing the meaning of discipleship, plus... dedicated Smiling Fingers.

Does your church have any Smiling Fingers?
Do they hold the Bible you read?

(end of story)

Song Amid Sorrow

The fresh morning breeze off the lake before me, calms my tone. A small single duck paddles a zigzag course ever watchful around it as the sun's reflection in the distance gives a show of dancing diamonds. The calm and quiet are like the anticipation before a beautiful song.

My reading the last few mornings included sorrowful curses and predictions of Israel's waywardness and forsaking God's leading. I about had my fill of discouraging verses and was about to skip to the good stuff. But not to be like the little duck, I continued a straight course of scripture reading. I progressed into the Song of Moses starting in Deuteronomy 32.

And to my surprise there it appeared like a beautiful water lily. This I would certainly have to remember and share. Read Moses' song – especially verses 10-14. These verses tell of the care and provision of God for His nation. In my mind, I see verse 10 written for the Pastor and parent. -

V10 - He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Then I see the same relationship pictured for children:

V11 - As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

Verse 12 states that same relationship in short simple words for the aged:

V12 - So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

I see verses 13 & 14 written to the homeless and hungry.

V13,14 - He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

Is your life a discouraging zigzag pattern with no anticipation of a song for you?

We see the water lilies in scripture, not by **READING** as a habit, but by **FEEDING** on it because of hunger. The song you hear in your heart is its Author with an encore just for you.

(end of story)

The Sophie Chair

Me not Her!!

...Pete complained to himself. The camp director had just asked Pete to set up a “computer Office” in a quick switch from the planned schedule for the next day. He explained that Sophie would be demonstrating good computing practices and techniques at all four of the back to back presentations starting immediately after chapel tomorrow morning.

Pete remembered Mr. Mason’s specific words... “and get her something to sit on.” He following his instructions but partly as a joke, Pete took two cement blocks and wedged an old bike seat between them for Sophie’s chair to do her presentations on.

All the while, Pete was more than irritated that she was chosen for the presentations. After all, he’d been a Sparkling Creek Camp counsellor longer than Sophie and if that wasn’t enough, Pete had a computer at home where she didn’t.

The next day, as chapel was letting out, Pete got a message on his pager to come to the camp director’s off ice, on the double.

What happened in the next few minutes, and subsequently the rest of the day, would make a lasting impresson on Pete all his natural born days.

With house-a-fire directives, Mr. Mason told Pete, that Sophie had been taken home in a rush, last night for some dire family need. He quickly shoved the rough script Sophie was going to use in her presentations, and told Pete the camp was depending on him to step in, and use the computer experience they knew he had, to do the presentations. The “go-get-em” gesture from Mr. Mason gave Pete no chance to decline, or voice his opinion.

Pete was just jogging over the hill toward the “computer office” put together in one corner of the activity hall when he looked at the script and saw the title for the presentations he was about to spend four hours conducting... “Computer Ergonomics – Posture and Furniture.”

Then he remembered it... the Sophie Chair.

The bike seat he’d created as a somewhat cruel joke, for Sophie, now was being played on himself.

It wasn’t long at all, before Pete realized how awful the bike seat really was, and also how important good seating and posture is, when computing.

How many times Pete’d answer the question at the end of most of his presentations, “Pete, this was sure a great lesson for me to take back home and share with my friends, but doesn’t that bicycle seat hurt?”

Working hard at holding back his true feelings about the cruel thing he’d planned, Pete would respond with, “Yes, It sure does hurt... more than I can tell.”

(end of story)

Spectacle Sam – Humility in leadership

“ZOWEEEE!” , “OH BOY!” , “THIS IS GONNA BE A BLAST!” all the clubbers exclaimed. Gramps had just given the clubbers the fantastic news: Next month the Computer Club is going to do a presentation at the nearby Paxton Community Church.” The silver haired leader of the preteen clubbers waited until the enthusiasm calmed just a bit. “OK gang. We’re gonna learn about Spectacle Sam.

In nothing flat, all of the club members sat Indian fashion on the worn out floor of the old clubhouse building in front of Gramps. Without coaxing, everyone got quiet as a graveyard for another one of Gramp’s stories you could make a movie from. He began with, “As we start preparing for the Paxton Presentation next month, we should learn a few things from spectacle Sam.”

“Sam would put on a pair of oversized eyeglasses with some weird colored clothes (eyeglasses are sometimes called ‘Spectacles’). He would climb up on a box so everyone would have to look up at him. He made you think he was some sort of clown or entertainer.”

“Sam would take three small parts from a trash computer and juggle them with his hands. After a minute he would stop and hold one of the parts up and give some kind of information about that part. The problem though, was that he mostly used big complicated words that confused most everyone listening to him. Boys and Girls you really got the idea that Sam was trying to make a big spectacle of himself and what he knew. It was like he was just trying to show off.” “When Sam would finish, everyone would clap and then kind of wander away from him. Something doesn’t sound quite right, does it clubbers?” asked Gramps.

“But one or two other times Samantha would take little Nenee by the hand and they’d both move to the front of the group. The older girl would carefully hand the little one a real small part found in computers. Samantha would sometimes get down on her knees so she was eye to eye with Nenee. The older girl would whisper in the little ear, the simple words Nenee would repeat to the club.”

“The duo would show the clubbers how much fun it is to tell others that big and small parts, just like big and small people, are all very important in getting things done. When the girls finished, the other clubbers applauded. But then they all moved up to Nenee and congratulated her with kind words and little hugs. No one ever knew how much those hugs meant to the little teacher.

“Gramps paused from his story about Sam and Samantha as he looked into the eyes of the dozen or so clubbers seated in front of him. He began again, “The Bible has exciting things to teach us about how to act around others and especially God. Listen to what God says to the Pharisee people that acted like Sam. In Luke 11:43 we read, *“Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.”*

That makes it pretty clear what God thinks of show-offs that try to get others to look up to them and almost worship them.” Directing his voice toward one of the back row clubbers, “Monte – I have a question for you. Why do you wear those glasses?”

“Well, Gramps. If I were watching little Nenee, in your story, I wouldn’t be able to see that tiny but important part she was talking about. My glasses make things clear; the things I look at, or try to read.” Monte got a serious look on his face as he spoke toward all the clubbers, “Without these glasses I would never be able to read God’s precious words myself.”

Darla asked Gramps, “Gramps, would you show us how to be spectacles that make God’s love clear?” Another clubber shot up with, “And not like those smart-alec Pharisees.” Gramps shook his head yes with a big smile and two solid thumbs up. “I’d love to. Let’s start with a Bible verse or two that describe Samantha and Nenee. We’ll read in II Tim 2:2

Can you find someone like little Nenee to practice with? God has a place for you to make a clear presentation of His love.

(end of story)

End of Bundle #08