



Paying It Forward

Beyond Counting Your Blessings

by Susan Bushu

At 7 a.m. on Friday, December 9, 2005, the day of the “hunker down with bread, batteries and blankets,” apocalypse-by-snow predictions, I was on my virgin voyage to Cherry Hill in my politically incorrect Chevy Blazer towing a toolbox. Snowflakes as big as the palm of my hand floated like butterflies in front of my windshield, reflecting pink from the morning sky. SEPTA’s behemoth buses fishtailed and stalled like sorry stallions, creating logjams up and down Henry Avenue that salt and sand trucks were trying to dislodge.

Cutting through the accumulation in four-wheel low, comfortable in my mother’s full length mink coat (inherited), front windows down, heat on and bun warmer blazing, I risked rape and robbery to offer a ride to three separate bus stop groups each of which, ignorant of SEPTA’s impotence, waved me off. It occurred to me that the negative energy of pervasive media has recently catapulted many potential adventurers into hyper vigilance. That an old woman in an old SUV wearing an old mink coat could be perceived as a threat.....Amen! (I would only add to this part of the story that showing off one’s driving skill by passing a municipal salt truck with the windows down is a very bad idea.)

This month so far I’ve stopped traffic on Chemical Road to

pick up a skinny, shivering, stray puppy, spent \$75 at the Dollar Store, (three dollars of which was for six light-up yo yo’s), gifted myself three pairs of Polo pajamas, (in direct contravention to my ‘Never Pay Retail’ mantra), hugged a police officer, told four contractors that I loved them and a massage therapist that we were in the same study group on the ‘other side,’ and invited over 100 friends to a Boxing Day Buffet and Bad Gift Exchange. I’m dancing through halcyon winter days with Josh Groben belting “Believe” on my boom box and Bony M caroling in my car. My gift to everyone I know has been USPS picture stamps - my own of my St. Bernard sporting a lilac in his big mouth. So, allow me to “Pay It Forward” to all of you with the following: Choose one or make up your own but at the very least, DO SOMETHING!

- Try not watching the news for a week, and instead ask someone in the grocery line what it is you want to know.
 - Rent: Polar Express, Love Actually, Bad Santa. (Any Video Store)
 - Pick up a copy of: Hanging Out The Wash, Random Acts of Kindness, At Home In Mitford, Heartsongs or, for the brave at heart, Journey of Souls. (Borders, Barnes & Noble, Amazon)
 - Watch Oprah
 - Spend an hour in a Dollar Store and buy something you don’t need but makes you smile.
 - If an animal figures in your holidays, adopt one! (Your local SPCA or one of many online Rescue Groups. Google ‘Animal Rescue’)
 - Over tip at every opportunity.
 - When you think it’s too cold to leave home, take a walk.
 - A cayenne capsule a day will warm you from the inside all winter. (CVS, Whole Foods, any health food store)
 - Lose the guilt and gift yourself with something you don’t think you can afford but really want - maybe a chocolate massage. (Jonathan Sills, CMP - my personal favorite)
- Lose some fear, get your head out of the equation and do something that just intuitively feels right. (Put a quarter in someone’s expired meter, say ‘Merry Christmas’ to a meter maid and mean it, tell a cop or a fireman thanks and mean it.)
- Let what you’re thinking come out of your mouth without editing first. (Apologize later if necessary.)
- And finally, remembering that he lived to be 165, consider ending each day with Noah’s prayer from The Preservationist: “Thank you Lord for another day. The health to enjoy it and a labor to perform.”

Happy Whatever You’re Celebrating To All! Now go out there and Pay It Forward!