



The Journal of Patapsco Friends Meeting

Acts of Kindness - as of April, 2018

Editor's Note:

For this issue, the topic is Acts of Kindness, whether focusing on acts of kindness done for us, or by us, or acts of kindness that people have observed. If you sent an article and it doesn't appear here, please alert me. - Ramona

ACTS OF KINDNESS: In Memory of Kitty Farnell

By Brenda Carr

Kitty Farnell was the kindest person I have ever known. The mother of my childhood best friend, she came to personify my concept of motherhood. Anyone who came into her sphere of influence held her in the highest regard. We lost her to cancer in 1964, my freshman year in college. Her memorial service was attended by Tampa's elite and the diverse recipients of her many acts of kindness.

Born, shortly after my family moved to 5101 Seminole Avenue, my mother quickly became her friend and a benefactor of her Kindness. Mrs. Farnell, as respectful Southerner's always addressed her, was married to the coach at Hillsborough H.S. across the street from our corner residence. She was pregnant with my "best friend" when my family of three older sisters, 12, 8 and 4 years old, moved into the corner house with an apartment. Sissy was born that Thanksgiving, four months after I arrived. The baby-sitting exchange was inevitable. Sissy's brother was only six and my mother,

the niece of a midwife, and my 12 year old sister were "masters" of childcare.

I suspect Mrs. Farnell had something to do with the fact that I was born in a hospital and my mother's attempt to bottle-feed me. My father was the working class guy on the block, having taken a job with the Continental Can Company to escape the pollution of the Ohio Valley caused by the booming steel industry in the West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania war production era of the 1940's. Taking advantage of the new VA benefits available in 1946 my father bought the "income property" in a neighborhood that included the retired post - master, a retired judge, his daughter who taught at the high school, our neighbor, "the coach," and the county tax appraiser, among others of "standing" in the Seminole Heights community.

My mother's mother died in September of 1947 after refusing to have her goiter removed at John Hopkins Hospital. She had traveled all the way from Lonaconing, MD to Baltimore, only to chicken out of having the life-saving surgery, to die of thyroid poisoning. My father would not pay for my mother's trip to attend the funeral, so Mrs. Farnell did. Additionally, she took care of me during that time.

One summer, when I was about eight, I came down with an abscessed molar while attending a camp owned by the now Superintendent of County Schools. Mrs. Farnell had made sure I shared her

daughter's privilege of attending their camp. She had their dentist open his office on a Sunday to attend to my emergency. I doubt that my father had any insurance to cover this expense or the expense of my birth in a hospital. On two occasions, I injured my fingers in car doors while being taken to church by the Farnells and both times it was the Farnells who had my injuries attended too.

As Sissy's best friend, I often got included in day trips to places like Wiki Watchie Springs and overnight stays at their beach house or trips to the Lake City Farm. I always had a new baby doll, like Sissy's at Christmas time and got to go to parties that Sissy got invited to. When we moved to Miami I was "friendless." My Sister eventually bought our old house and I got to return for visits. But Sissy had moved on to new friends. Kitty saw my disappointment at Sissy's loss of connection with me and often took the time to visit with me when Sissy escaped to be with her "sorority sisters."

But, I was not the only recipient of Mrs. Farnell's kindness. I learned as an adult that the reason we were forbidden from going into Chris's house was because his mother was an alcoholic. Chris was part of our neighborhood gang of five that got watched over by the moms on the block. He had a short temper and often got into fights with Greg that I took it upon myself to break up. I suspect some fights resulted from slurs about his Mom, but that awareness escaped my consciousness at the time. Chris and I were both benefactors of the Farnells for our first summer jobs. I got to put brown butcher paper on the used school books that were passed to the black schools and Chris got jobs with the maintenance crew for the schools. Segregation persisted in the Hillsborough County Schools well into the

early 70's. My 1st summer home from college, I got to fill in for the secretaries on vacation and Chris got to work in the mechanic's shop.

Mrs. Farnell also watched over the two retired elderly school teachers who lived next to her and whom I suspect were a gay couple. She had attended Wesleyan College and maintained a friendship with a sorority sister, Billie, and her companion that lived nearby. In addition to her acceptance of their life choices, I suspect that she watched out for their welfare. I know that she watched out for the welfare of the families of "our gang." Included in the sphere of her kindness were the various maids that served her household and their families. I'm sure that they were paid well and got care when they needed it. Kitty Lee Farnell had inherited her family business, Lee's Hair Tonic, and was independently wealthy.

Unfortunately, it was probably the ingredients in the tonic that led to her parents' demise by cancer as well as her own. Sissy went to Wesleyan and got a degree in Biology so she could participate in cancer research. She married an attorney friend of her brothers and seemed to be headed for productive life when a drunk driver slammed into the couple's car as they left a party at the Farm.

Mrs. Farnell came to personify the concept kindness that I have attempted to emulate in my life.

A Tale of Kindness by Andrea Miotto

In the past few months, I've been the recipient of an avalanche of kindness—so much kindness that it's hard to acknowledge all of it or keep track of it. Acts of grace from friends, strangers, relatives, and acquaintances, have watered a period of

scarcity in my life—a scarcity of hope, of financial resources, of purpose, of confidence, of self-worth.

This fall, I've alternately felt either that I was trapped in a dark tunnel or trapped in a room crowded with too many loud lights competing for my attention. The dark tunnel is depression. The noisy, blinding room is my confusing journey through the public benefits system. But when I stumbled in the tunnel, a kind friend or a kind stranger lifted me up. When I covered my eyes from the too-bright lights, a gentle hand guided me in the right direction or gave me the information I needed.

“Kindness” comes from the Old English word *cynn*, meaning kin. So kindness started out as the idea that you treat someone as family—with the respect, consideration, and care one would offer a relative. Some modern, progressive translations of the Bible have started rendering the word “kingdom” in the New Testament as “kindom.” In this sense, Jesus is seeking, not a Kingdom of God, but a Kindom of God: a realm in which we recognize and treat our fellow beings as beloved brothers and sisters.

This fall and summer, I've dealt with job loss, two moves, depression, hospitalization, unemployment, the struggle to qualify for and receive public benefits (when I started receiving unemployment benefits, my food stamps disappeared, for example) and the need to reassess my career and other aspirations. Through it all, family, friends (especially Friends!) and even relatives of friends and friends of relatives have stood by me and treated me as truly one of their kin. I have found listeners, guides, benefactors, coaches, confidantes, compatriots and companions along every step of the way. When I was on the edge of tears at the social services office, a kind

fellow-client offered me a tissue. Fellow patients in the hospital expressed appreciation for me as a person and shared meals with me. A cousin set up a gofundme campaign for me and relatives I had not seen in decades donated to it. A particularly involved case manager let me know about benefits in the community that she did not have to tell me about. My immediate family offered encouragement, reassurance, love, and more listening; they visited me in the hospital and promised me I still had much to offer. People emailed me job leads or volunteer opportunities or ideas for living situations. I often was brought to tears when I received a card or a text or an invitation to dinner. All these people have treated me truly as a beloved sister.

The Old Testament describes God twelve times as “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” I have seen, as Friends say, “that of God” in the people who have stuck by me and picked me up when I have fallen and borne with my faults during this time. Depression does not make the temper sweet; it does not make one a reliable friend or a selfless companion. The kindness I have received has been partly composed of what my loved ones have not done: they have not berated me when my self-absorption showed; they have not thrown me out of their lives for repeatedly cancelling plans; they have not abandoned me when I've been too down to get in touch. They have indeed been slow to anger and burning with steadfast love for me even when love felt far away.

This holiday season I am deeply humbled and grateful for all the words and acts of generosity, love, kindness, affection and affirmation I have received. The way ahead is still unclear; I'm still grieving losses and facing uncertainties that cause anxiety. At the same time, I know that, even in a world

that can seem shadowed both personally and politically, kindness wins out over all attempts to silence the Inner Light.

If you'd like to read more about my journey toward wholeness and meaning in the midst of depression, please follow my blog at <https://hopeisyellow.wordpress.com/>. You can click on the "follow" button in the bottom right hand corner of the blog and enter your email. You will receive an email when I post new content. My hope is that the content will interest and maybe help other people, and it gives me a sense of purpose when it's hard to get out of bed.

An Act of Kindness

by Julie Klopp

Twenty years ago, my husband and I were living in Colorado. Every weekend I would take my dog into the mountains for a hike. Often, I went with friends, but this particular day, it was just the two of us.

My truck was almost out of gas and I had planned to buy some after our hike, but when I reached the gas station I realized I had nothing to buy it with. At the time my husband and I had only one credit card and I suddenly pictured it at home on the dining room table with the L.L. Bean catalog I had just ordered from. And for reasons I cannot remember, the only cash I had on hand was some Canadian quarters.

Hoping for the best, I took the quarters inside and asked the clerk if he would accept them. He would not, but our exchange was overhead by the man behind me in line. He asked how much money I needed and I thought quickly and decided that two dollars would be enough to get me home. He gave me the money, I thanked him, and I went on my way.

A few months later I was again getting gas and a young woman came up to me asking if I could spare some money so she could buy enough gas to get home. Remembering my own situation, I asked her how much she needed. *Two dollars* was her reply.

Two dollars is such a small amount of money but it made a big difference to both of us in the moment that we needed it. It was a kindness that I now had the opportunity to pass on.

I like to think of that two dollars continuing on through the world, going where it is most needed and leaving a little trail of connections in its wake. Nothing huge, no world-changing moments, just the simple act of being there for someone when they need it.

Two Acts of Kindness Stories

From Robin Tate

On Saturday evening I attended a fundraiser for Thrive Baltimore. I parked on a parking lot adjacent to the venue and was exiting my car at the same time as two other attendees. One was a woman who had come alone and the other was a mother who had come with her young son. We all walked together to the venue and had asked the door attendant about the parking situation. We were informed that we would have to walk to a nearby parking garage and pay for permits to display in our car windows, so that they would not be towed from the 'overflow' parking lot where we had conveniently, but mistakenly parked. The woman with the young son went into the venue and said that she would come out later and walk to the garage after she got settled in. The other woman and I walked directly to the garage to pay for our permits. When we got there, the other woman, with whom I later became friends, paid for not only her

permit, but for the permit of the woman with the young son. The two of us walked back to the parking lot, placed our permits on our windshields and on the windshield of the other person and headed to the venue. The lady with the young son was so grateful and tried offering to pay my friend back as a way of saying 'thank you', which was of course, not accepted.

The second act of kindness involves a young couple who have a commercial/residential cleaning business. They were hired by an older woman who had moved to an old Victorian house because her previous home had been destroyed by fire. The young woman told me that the woman's new home had been severely neglected and was extremely untidy. The couple spent the entire weekend doing detailed cleaning in the entire home, then refused to charge the woman for their labor. They stated that she was in desperate need of assistance and they were happy to help her, given the recent loss of her home.

Reflections on Kindness

Susannah Rose

Somehow the word “kindness” is closely related to the idea of “gifts” in my mind. The gift of a smile from a stranger, the gift of friendly support, the gift of open-hearted listening, a material gift that shows an awareness of who I am and what might help me thrive. The gift of the warm feel of kindness itself.

When I was a young person visiting New York City, I was frightened of the city. The crime rate was high. I wanted to get around and see the museums, but I was by myself and I felt vulnerable. My fear increased when I walked by a building and saw a man come out flashing a knife. (He walked on in

the other direction.) Then, getting onto the bus, I stumbled and cut my knee in my haste to get out of the way of those impatient, quick-moving New Yorkers. I hobbled to the only seat, at the back. I looked up and saw an elderly woman making her slow and careful way toward me on the moving bus. She arrived and gently handed me a band-aid. Her gift took away my fear and gave me a lasting memory of kindness.

I also remember other strangers who showed me something I can't name, but it was not kindness. It was a conversation I overheard that chilled me and froze itself into my memory. It was a long time ago. I was in a booth across from two young men with a conspiratorial air, talking loudly and laughing. I was alone, they were nearby, and I couldn't help overhearing. They were talking of several instances in which they had given people wrapped presents with nothing inside. They were hooting at the puzzled reactions of the people who had received them, including “friends” whose wedding they had attended. “You know, I opened your gift and there was nothing inside. It's so strange...” They thought their friends' confusion and disappointed expectations were hilarious. The story of the Empty Gift sickened me.

Even when there is a gift in the box, of course, it's not necessarily a kindness. The ability to give, like the ability to disappoint, can imply a power structure. But kindness doesn't have to work that way. I read a magical book called “The Gift” by Lewis Hyde, who writes about the kind of gift that stays in motion, the kind of gift that doesn't end with two people but keeps going because the gift becomes part of the next gift and the next. Gift with a capital “g.” it's very different from a gift with expectations, one that may look like kindness but comes with an agenda. The Gift is imaged for me in

a Native American dance I read of in which a woman is honored to receive the gift of clothing passed down from the ancestors to wear and dance with, but the next year she is to pass it on to someone else. The Gift moves beyond boundaries. It just keeps dancing.

It is not easy to give and let go of expectations that something will come back to the giver. It is natural to want the person to at least appreciate the gift. But wanting something shackles a Gift and diminishes it. When I was in Uganda, I took two young street children under my wing and paid for boarding schools for them, at their request. I couldn't help imagining and hoping that my gift would enable them to move from the bottom, despised rung of society to become skilled and respected, and of course that would come back to me as the pleasure of having done a good thing. They were so smart and did so well at first. I had found a foster parent, Joseph, a kind social worker. But the old habits were too strong. Isaac began sniffing glue again, and he was dragging Brian back with him. The social worker called us together to talk; he felt that he could no longer keep both boys. I remember my anger and disappointment. The money I sent was a lot for me – why couldn't they do their part? I felt hard and clenched. Then I saw Isaac across the table trembling in fear. All of the anger did not melt, but some of it did. I hadn't been able to give them the gift of kindness and a chance at a different life that was really free of strings.

The Golden Rule is sometimes corrected to read, "Do unto others as they wish to be done unto." This adds a layer of complexity. When I was a child, I wanted books, but my parents didn't consider books a real present. My mother gave me gadgets from a catalogue. I gave her many things that didn't

interest her either, though I thought they were beautiful. If we had managed to summon the true kindness of noticing each other more carefully and seeing how we were different, we would have had a less painful relationship.

Kindness means paying attention. It means letting go of expectations. It means noticing when someone means to be kind, even if the gift they offer is not actually helpful. We all need forgiveness, and the practice of forgiveness is excellent exercise for the soul. An attempt to be kind should always be received as a gift.

Acts of Kindness – One Example

By Ramona Buck

Many years ago, I was in my home Meeting at Waynesville, Ohio, playing the hymns for everyone to sing before Meeting for Worship. I was probably in 6th or 7th grade. Somehow, I got started with my hands in the wrong place and the notes came out disjointed and wrong. I couldn't seem to get them back in place. And finally someone else took over for me. Mortified, I ran to the car in tears!

I stayed there for about half an hour and then my older sister, Wilhelmina, and her fiancé, Byron, came looking for me. They got into the car although I felt badly that they were seeing me crying. And they then told me of the many times they had felt embarrassed or had made mistakes. Some instances were even funny so we laughed together. At the end of our conversation, I felt so much better – I was not alone – I understood better that mistakes are part of the human condition. That was a wonderful act of kindness.

A Kind Neighbor Family

by Bob Rhudy

When I was three to nearly six years old, I lived in Havre de Grace, Maryland, a little town at the top of the Chesapeake Bay. I had been adopted shortly after my birth in September 1944, following my unmarried birth mother's learning that my birth father had been killed in combat in Europe that June.

My adoptive parents divorced in 1947, however, and I was being raised in a very dysfunctional household by my alcoholic adoptive mother. My father had left Maryland upon the divorce, and I did not see or hear from him for more than three years. I was often locked alone in my room for hours while my mother was "out and about," before returning inebriated, and I learned by necessity, pretty early, how to feed and care for myself.

I also received (or took) a lot of freedom, early on, to run around town by myself, which I liked, including by age five going to the movies downtown on Saturday afternoons, and visiting with older families around my neighborhood throughout the week. I remember with much fondness a couple living at the end of my block who operated an Italian restaurant in their home. It seems that whenever I managed to end up at their door, there was always love, care, kindness, and as much pasta and sauce as I could want, and I always left nourished and happy.

Just before my sixth birthday, my father was contacted by the Department of Social Services to ask if he would take custody of me before I would be removed and placed in foster care; with the result that I moved to his family in Appalachia 400 miles away

and lost all contact with my Havre de Grace family and neighbors for nearly thirty years.

I believe my lovely Italian neighbors knew about my home situation and sought to look after me. They continue to be among my fondest memories from my early years, and I honor their kindness to that little boy. They have stayed with me throughout my life.

One Man's Acts of Kindness

by Andre' DeLaney,

As interviewed by phone by Kent Brewer, both members of the former South Mountain Friends Fellowship - Phone Interview of January 22, 2018

Q: Andre, how do you feel about being interviewed on the subject of "Acts of Kindness?"

Andre: I think it is a good thing to talk about. Lots of people help me all the time and I like helping other people too. I don't have a lot of money but it doesn't take money to be kind.

Q: Are you sure you don't need money to do an act of kindness?

Andre: Yes, I'm sure. A few days ago, I saw a cat walking on the street so it wouldn't be hit by a car. I brought the cat into my house and fed it and then let it go. I wish I had a cat of my own. Giving that cat a meal and some milk was a nice thing to do, and it made me feel good.

Q: Why don't you ask your housemother if you can adopt a homeless kitten from an animal shelter?

Andre: That would be nice. I have been thinking about that. I love animals and I know a cat would be happy living with me.

I would treat the at with kindness and it would be kind to me.

Q: What other acts of kindness have you done lately?

Andre: Well, I recently gave a homeless man a dollar. He looked hungry. It was all the money I had on me.

Q: Is there anything else you want to share?

Andre: Oh, yes, I gave one of my friends, who likes sweets, some candy. I also do housecleaning and other chores like cooking meals. I don't mind because I like helping out whenever I can.

Q: Andre, has anyone told you lately that you are a very special man?

Andre: Sometimes people tell me that.

Q: Thank you, Andre, for sharing your acts of kindness!

Andre: You are welcome!

Tender Mercies of the Heart

By Kent Allen Brewer,
Member, South Mountain Friends
Fellowship

I once watched a movie entitled "Tender Mercies" and have since been intrigued by the title. Tender mercies . . . two words which seem to go hand in hand: a perfect match, making a powerful union.

Haven't we all come into contact with humans and animals who have been beaten down by life in one way or another? They are those who are vulnerable and easily broken and left damaged by the insensitive and thoughtless actions of others.

There have been times in my past when I have been unkind to others less fortunate or simply different than myself. I have even been ashamed of being seen with those typically shunned by so much of our society. But no more.

We have seen the neighbor old beyond his years from a lifetime of hardship – shoulders bent, head low, lifeless eyes devoid of hope, a defeated spirit. Or a mother with children living in a shelter, using every ounce of her strength to keep her family together; trying to keep hope alive in her heart for just one chance to escape poverty and live a normal life. Her clothing is frayed and the donated used shoes leave her feet swollen and sore.

With age has come the realization (for me) that the most powerful acts of kindness are those done with tenderness and mercy, and done anonymously. I believe one's true character is revealed more clearly in the darkness.

The down and out neighbor finds an envelope under his door containing enough money to cover the rent.

The homeless mother receives a gift card which will allow her to purchase clothing and shoes for an upcoming job interview. For the first time in years, she is filled with a sense of hopefulness for the future.

Acts of tenderness, mercy and kindness don't always require money; often just a touch of compassion. Volunteering at an animal shelter and doing your best to give love and comfort to other living creatures at a time when it is surely needed; taking your gentle "people friendly" dog to visit those in a hospice or nursing home; mowing your neighbor's lawn; Putting your arm around the shoulder of someone rejected by society. Such an act of tenderness allows the world

to see the value of all life, regardless of status. Or giving a friendly smile and a warm “hello” for a stranger to whom no one has spoken to in days.

I desire to walk in the light of integrity and character as I travel the road of life toward the unknown of eternity. Each time I do a kindness for another, I am doing myself a kindness.

Yes, it is OK for me to reveal my softer emotions; to show caring, consideration and tender regard for others, especially to those whom I believe to be most in need of compassion a gentle touch, a kind word or two. My heart is huge and capable of endless acts of tender mercies. I just need to open my heart and let them flow and flow and flow all the days of my life.

Paying It Forward

by Perry Adam Webb,
Member, South Mountain Friends
Fellowship

When I think about the word, kindness, and acts of kindness, I think about my big sister, Katie Perez and the selfless acts of my Quaker family.

Throughout the past decade of challenging days, weeks and months, then the years passed by, you guys have stood the test of time by my side.

Big Sis Katie, your kindness is priceless like mother-love. When something goes wrong, you always have a positive word to say and the counseling you have given to me is like the Mother lives within you.

Mr. Jim and Ms. Susannah, thanks for your encouragement, and Ms. Susannah, thanks for being my number 1 fan! Your heartfelt letters push me to stay in the light of God.

Ms. Ramona and Mr. John, thanks for keeping me on point and in the light. Mr. John, you’re the best and God Bless you.

Mr Bob and Ms Becca, your kindness will always push me to help others and to let my Light shine just like yours.

Ms. Rosemary, your kindness is unforgettable. Ms. Linda please keep that smile on your face, which keeps me in the light and in Check.

I have learned through each and every one of you, that through a kind act of love, we can heal, teach, and bring others into the Light and out from the darkness of sin. With the tools that I’ve received from each and everyone of you, I will use in my life to help others in need. God bless you all and the rest of the Quaker family. I will “pay it forward.”

Kindness by Darren McCoy
Member, South Mountain Friends
Fellowship

(editor’s note: this is a poem – but because of the limitations of the size of the column, I wasn’t able to print it in exactly the way it was written – R.B.)

Kindness is a two-way street, navigated
sometimes by need or simply just because!
If you trace our very existence back to when
GOD created man, even then, kindness was.
It’s been committed by saints and by
sinners, losers and winners, and has
managed to surprise quite a few.
In the worst of times like famine or war, it’s
been the proper thing for people to do.
It’s brought many to tears, and put smiles on
some faces, and has even caused some
standing ovations.
It has re-built some houses, fed entire tribes
and has even save a few nations.

It's given way to some hugs and some
sloppy kisses,
And millions of pots of hot soups.
For decades it even caused a comedian
named Bob Hope to somehow entertain our
troops.
It's the mark of good character and high
moral fiber and not too bad to receive.
It's been the reason for more marriages than
E-Harmony and Tender together, which may
be hard to believe.
It has softened the heart of a killer, and
saved a harlot named Mary, and caused a
few people to wash others' feet. It's turned
despair into hope, hatred into love and has
made bitter tears taste sweet.
It has saved a wretch like me by changing
my heart and thankfully renewing my mind.
So without a doubt, the greatest gift to give or
receive is of course –
Just to be **KIND!**