

BananaNose Fun Times

November 2005



Lessons From My Grand Aunt Rose

“Laugh a lot and don’t worry about what nobody else thinks.” Aunt Rose was born in 1898, the baby of seven. She was my grandfather’s sister...a lady with a big loving heart who lived for 89 years.

She was a very funny lady who loved to laugh, but in the last decades of her life she was also a very lonely lady having outlived most of her family and friends. Recently I spoke to a wonderful group of nursing home social workers on “Teaching and Expecting Compassion.” I concluded by telling them about Aunt Rose and read them excerpts from a few of the many letters that she had written me. I used to drive up to see her once or twice a month in Dover, NH before I moved to Honolulu many years ago. After that I only saw her once or twice a year when I was back East, but we would write each other 2-3 times a month. Her letters are treasures to me because they tell me so much about my grandfather and father when they were young. Her letters to me also



reveal how a little love and compassion can mean the world to a lonely person. Inside are more lessons from Aunt Rose and some excerpts from her letters. You’ll see she was a lovely, funny person. When we give a little of our-

selves we get as much or more back. This fall I went to our elementary school to see the 4th grade boy I have been mentoring for the last couple of years. For the most part I just show up once a week for 30 minutes and we play games, but I hadn’t seen him since school let out in June. I was feeling tired from traveling and generally a little blue, but all of that disappeared the moment I saw this big smile spread over his face when he saw me walk in the room!

Is there an aunt or someone in your neighborhood, local school or nursing home for whom a little caring from you could mean so much? This small investment of your time will reap tremendous benefits for both of you.

Handwritten signature of Mark.

Stories from the Road

“My father was in his last days. We were all gathered around his bed. My dad hadn’t said anything in three days and seemed to be in a deep sleep. An old friend came into the room. He said, ‘Hi Jack.’ Much to our surprise, my father spoke, ‘Better not say that in an airport.’ That was the last thing he said before he died several days later. We still laugh about it today.”

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A mom picked her 4 year old up from day care. The boy excitedly told the mom, “Robbie said the ‘F’ word. “What did he say?” “I can’t say it, mom.” “You can tell me.” “I can’t. It’s a 4-letter word. Oh, alright, ‘poop’.”

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One mom was telling me about being at Mass one Sunday when her son was two years old. The boy picked up his grandmother’s rosary beads. During a very quiet part of the Mass he began swinging the beads above his head saying in a very audible voice, “Hang on,

Jesus. We’re going for a ride!” Being mortified is one of the parts of parenthood you don’t think about before becoming a parent.

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A patient named Tom Collins had checked in at a day surgery center. A nurse went to the crowded waiting room and called for “Jack Daniels.” Several times she called “Jack Daniels” with no response at all. She went back to the pre-op center and told the other nurses, “There is no patient named Jack Daniels in the waiting area.” She was met by gales of laughter from the other nurses. Realizing her mistake she began to laugh too. The red-faced nurse went back to the waiting room and called for “Tom Collins.” Tom stood up immediately and the whole room giggled, including Tom. For an added laugh, a couple of minutes later she should have gone back and asked for “Jim Beam.”

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We often believe that we are communicating clearly when this

is just not the case. A nurse at the national Press Ganey Customer Service Conference told me this story about her father. “George was a pretty smart guy, but not overly educated about healthcare matters. George loved his meat and potatoes diet, but after a close call with angina resulting in angioplasty and stent placement, he did make one concession and changed the way he grilled his steaks. Post angioplasty he insisted on cooking his and everyone else’s steaks extremely well done! After six months of burned steaks one of his sons stood up and said, ‘No more Dad! I don’t want my steaks burned like that. Why are you doing this?’ George replied, ‘I’m doing this on doctor’s orders. He told me no more red meat!’”

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After giving her 3-year-old grandson a bath, Grandma said “Now dry your duppee.” To which he replied, “Grandma, don’t you know a penis when you see one?”

Make it Personal

A lot of my work today is in the area of customer service excellence. I can’t help myself from observing both the excellent and not-so-good service. At my mother-in-law’s nursing home, I was continually surprised how the little things escaped the staff. Many staff never met our eyes, smiled, or said hello as we walked through the home to my mother-in-law’s room. We were there a lot, but they seemed not to notice visitors, even the “regulars.” I was sitting with my mother-in-law one evening when her dinner was served. She asked for something to drink. The server stepped just out of the room—well within hearing range—and said to her co-worker, “Get her a drink.” It bothered me. I wanted to hear her use my beloved mother-in-law’s name, e.g., “Could you get Jeannie a drink?” One way de-personalizes, the other personalizes. Add up the little de-personalizing things over a day, a week, or a month, and I think it makes a difference in the quality of care and in the person’s spirit.

What could you do in your work to make it personal?

Time with Patch

Patch Adams is a fascinating man. I first met him in 1983, long before he was famous. Patch inspired me to do the work I do. He is a funny man of great compassion who is passionate about peace and service to others. He can perform from memory the poetry of Milton, EE Cummings, Mary Oliver, Shakespeare and many others. He is so much more than the Robin Williams movie character.



I got to spend a crazy, wonderful weekend with him a few months ago. Patch began the retreat by asking the 70 participants to introduce themselves

by telling the group something mildly astonishing about him/herself. This was difficult for many. What would you say?

Patch believes that we are all funny. Stick your tongue out. Wear a nose, walk backwards, sideways, or every third step squat and say “BOING!”

Guaranteed people will laugh. Wear mismatched, funny, bright colored socks. From now on if you are not making people laugh, it’s not because of a lack of knowledge; it is a lack of doing. Other highlights: Do you want to be taken seriously or do you want to be taken lovingly? Get good at friendship. Loneliness is the most devastating illness. Be a fabulous listener. Live the life of an “enthusiaster,” so that people come up to you and say, “Why are you so happy?”

Clowning is a tool for loving. (Patch takes groups of clowns into the hospitals and orphanages of Russia and Afghanistan.) Cynicism is intellectual whining. If you really think about the human body, it is amazing the head doesn’t explode with wonder. Fill your world with land mines of fun. Find creativity in every act. Why blow a moment? Every moment is an opportunity to create joy. We are born into a miracle. Passion is not a product, but a process. Intend to be happy. Intend to be sweet. Ground yourself in a mission of higher good and service. Make it fun. Tom Sawyer didn’t get anyone to help him paint the fence by saying, “This really sucks!” Can you believe that Darwin wrote four books on barnacles! Four! Enjoy a personal, perpetual experience of the miracle of life.



“See the butterfly in people who may be caterpillars.”

Jean Houston

(This photo was sent for JOY TOO by Anne-Marie Gonzales. Thank you!)

APPEAL FOR PHOTOS

Please look through your photo albums. Not only is this a great way to remind yourself of good times, but if you find a few photos that epitomize joy to you, send or email them to me to be considered for the Joy Too! video. I received some after the previous newsletter, but not nearly enough. A few are in the banner on the front page. So have fun today looking at your photos and send a few of your favorites to me. I’ll send you a free DVD if yours are included. Photographs are great reminders of our “pockets of contentment.”

Wonderful Lessons from Aunt Rose

*Love your family fiercely.
Live life with no "regretty."*

You don't have to win a Nobel prize to be a prize human being.

Excerpts from her letters:

JUNE 1975 "My dear sweetheart grand nephew Mark, Thank you for the Beautiful Birthcard. It was a thrill to receive it. Gee, Mark, it sure worth living to 78 when you have someone to love like you. I didn't want to, but I'm going to try to live to 79 so I can see you again. You're a darling, Mark. How is Rae? (My wife of 30 years, but then my fiancé who Aunt Rose would meet a couple months later.) I hope she full of fun and she learn to like me just a little wee bit. I think when I meet her, she going to say, "What end of the woodshed she from?" It a long time to wait, but honest Mark, your old Aunt Rose is going to try to be good when I meet her."

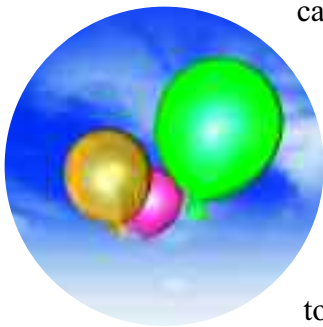
SEPTEMBER 30, 1975 (a month after she met my bride.) "Mark, you try to help around the house as much as you can. I only meet Rae once, but she appeal to me like a very nice person, but everybody need help to be nice. I know it was my dad and sisters

that help me to be good and still be devil who like to laugh. Rae, don't let that married man think he can't do housework. I know you love him as I do, but no bad habits, Rae, because once he get the habit of doing nothing, oh boy, you have to do it all."

AUGUST 28, 1978 (after a visit with our baby, Mari, in Aunt Rose's arms in the photo on first page) "What a pleasure to have you two visit this old gray mare. I'm only a weed in the grass that only went to 3rd grade and can't spell, but I will never forget you, honey, and that wife of yours is as sweet as you are. Now you bring me my baby too! I may be in the way here, but with you two lovebirds and my baby, I live to 100 Ha! Ha! Come home and I'll give you 25 cents a week spending money and board and room Ha! Ha! That's all I ever got—10 cents for Church, 10 cents for the movie Saturday afternoon and save the nickel till I had enough for a hair ribbon. Those were the happy days!"

Carry Balloons!

I carry balloons in my pockets or briefcase whenever I travel. Air travel can make me cranky, and I sometimes would like to throw a tantrum like some of the overtired toddlers I see in airports. A balloon can turn a crying child into a smiling one. A few weeks ago I was sitting at O'Hare, which was in one of its many weather meltdowns; my flight was delayed for hours. There was a young dad with his screaming two-year-old daughter in the gate area. She was sick and tired of traveling and was letting it all out. Dad was at his wit's end trying to calm her. I blew up one of my star balloons and asked the dad if it was OK to give it to her. It was more than OK.



She transformed instantly into a smiling, playful little girl. I was happy to see her happy; the dad was happy and grateful, as were the other passengers, who no longer had to listen to the crying. That simple balloon entertained her for the next hour before we got to board and through the short flight. I gave him an extra to blow up if that one broke. (Only

blow them up part way so they are less likely to pop.)

Ever notice how quickly a child can go from miserable to happy? Kids are willing to substitute happiness for misery. As adults we are much more reluctant to give up our misery. After all we were right and we really were put upon! What happened was really painful. But just maybe we could learn something from children on this one.

**Seen on a sign from a Missouri restaurant:
SHOES REQUIRED TO EAT
IN THIS RESTAURANT.**

Under it someone had hand-written. "Socks don't have to eat if they don't want to."

THE THERRIEN HOMES ON THE BIG ISLAND OF HAWAII

In need of a relaxing vacation? Try our homes on the Big Island. Both the larger house and the guest cottage have great lanais to sit on for hours looking at an unobstructed view of the ocean, whales in the winter, and occasionally double rainbows. They are nestled about 500 feet above sea level on the slopes of Mauna Kea, the magnificent 13,796 foot mountain that in the winter is actually snow capped. But at 500 feet, you won't feel the cold.

Waipunalei (easy and beautiful to say...“why poona lay”) is just 2 miles out of the old style sleepy town of Laupahoe. Laupahoe Point, a mile down the road

to the ocean from the house, is one of the most beautiful miles you will ever walk or drive...vistas of green cliffs, often with waterfalls dropping to blue green ocean. When you get to the Point, there is some of the most spectacular rugged coastline and pounding surf you will ever see.

Each house has two bedrooms and one bath. They are furnished as our homes...not like rental properties. Each has a well-stocked kitchen, linens, washer and dryer. Fruit trees are abundant. The gardens are full of tropical flowers planted by Mark and cared for lovingly by Bobby, a man who has rarely left Waipunalei. He says, “It is so beautiful in



Waipunalei, why would I want to go anywhere else?” Bobby is very respectful of privacy and he is a wonderful man to “talk story” with if you have the chance. He will more than likely leave bananas, papayas, or some other surprise on your lanai. Beautiful bamboo and ti plants provide sight and sound privacy between the houses. Large windows continually remind you to look at the marvelous ocean. Just sit with a mai tai or a glass of juice on the lanai, and you’ll know Bobby is right... Waipunalei is heaven. You'll enjoy exploring this beautiful island...the way other parts of Hawaii used to be. But when you go home late in the afternoon, you’ll be glad to be home. Just sit, relax,

and enjoy. Beach chairs and umbrellas, boogie boards and charcoal grills are there for your use. People are expected to leave the houses in nice condition for the next people. This is reflected in our reasonable rates: Larger house \$850 plus tax a week; Guest house \$750 plus tax a week. Big group? Rent both houses.

To read more and to see more photos, go to my website: www.banananose.com.

For more information on these relaxing Hawaiian vacation homes, call Rae or Mark at 1-800-373-3112. We delight in sharing this piece of paradise with others.

For information about having Mark Therrien present for your organization or association:



InnerPlay LLC

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(800) 373-3112
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Email: mark@banananose.com



Smile on sticks \$2 at
www.banananose.com
NOSES TOO!

Heard on a United flight during the seat belt demonstration:

“For those of you haven’t been in a car since 1960, slip the metal end, ‘OK everyone look and listen’... click.”



Thanks to Sue Carstens for sending in this sign.



It Could Be Worse

Not happy with your neighbor’s pink flamingo lawn ornament? How about one that’s 30 feet tall in this Oshkosh, WI yard?

The Banana Nose Fun Times newsletter comes out occasionally and is available free at:
www.banananose.com

To receive email notice of new issues simply email: mark@banananose.com.