Writing to Remember Moments of Awe in Your Life

A way to recall the joy and light



By Bill Zimmerman & YOU

Art by David Gothard

An interactive digital book from MakeBeliefsComix

This book of stories of awe belongs to:

TYPE YOUR NAME HERE

Date begun:

TYPE HERE

Dedication

For my wife and daughter and the many others I love. And for Judy, my childhood angel cousin who'd make me giggle.



This is the way it was, this book is who I am. I have done my best.

-BZ

Writing to Remember Moments of Awe in Your Life

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Before You Begin Reading and Writing in This Book...

Dear young and older readers,



Here is a book to help you recall the moments of awe in your life, the times when you look back in wonder and see how truly blessed you have been. I invite you to write in its pages the stories about your encounters with such joy and light.

In this book I also have written my own stories of awe; I do so at a time of illness when I want to focus only on the good in my life to find comfort and strength. In writing about these special moments I find solace and ease my pain by reliving the joy I felt when I first experienced them. By writing about them I practice awe.

In working on this book,
I have come to see that
many of the instances
that provoked awe
took place in my
childhood, even
though it was a
difficult period

filled with much family strife. My parents continually fought with each other and each day dealt was fraught with difficult financial problems. Painful memories still linger, and the stories I tell here



WHEN BILL WAS A BOY

reflect my own search for safety and hope as a child. Looking back now, I love the little boy I once was, for I see that even though he was so afraid most of the time, he also had courage—he was blessed with fierce strength to carry on. If you feel afraid at times, too, and if you seek hope, then this is the book for you.

When thinking about this book I pictured in my mind the image of an adult writing, with a child also sitting on his shoulders or lap. That image also reflects how I wrote the book, from the viewpoint of an adult remembering himself as a child and his important experiences. By writing, I wanted somehow to hold onto my childhood because, despite its problems, that was also such a rich time and influenced the way I developed as a human being. Writing about one's blessings is an exercise that an adult can undertake with a child to share important information. That way a youngster can better understand an adult's past and what shaped that person. Children need to hear such stories to learn and gain hope for their own lives, too.

Deep down in my heart I hope that boys and girls will read and write in this book to find comfort. From recounting stories from my childhood to young readers, the awesome lesson I have learned and wish to share with you is that no matter how difficult life may seem



at times there always are bright, shining moments, too, if you are alert and recognize them. These can be as simple as experiencing a simple act of kindness by someone, such as a teacher or coach, or receiving a word of encouragement when you feel low and alone. Maybe such a bright moment is seeing the tip of a bulb bursting through the earth on a cold, late winter day. Maybe it's a prayer or hopeful thought. Maybe it's just having a good friend with whom you feel comfortable. Perhaps it's feeding someone who is hungry and seeing that person enjoy the food you prepared for him. Try to write about these special moments of awe in this journaling book.

To help you express your own memories you will find with each of my personal stories an accompanying writing prompt to guide you in telling your own awesome story. The stories and prompts are meant to help

you recall the special moments in your own life, whether they have to do with experiences or with people. The memories are always there for you to recollect if you can just find a quiet place to think and write and take the time to see the rays

of light in your life. As you put words

down you will get in touch with





the deepest parts of you which otherwise might be hidden. You reveal yourself to yourself, and that is a good thing.



May this book of recollections provide a beacon of light in finding your own way, and may you have many more stories of awe to tell in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Biel Zimmermon

Bill Zimmerman

P.S. To get your own copy of this e-book, you first need to download it from the website. You can fill in the answers to the questions on the pages by typing on your computer screen and saving the file, or you can print out any pages and fill in the answers by hand. If you wish to share all your special thoughts in the completed digital book with someone, you can email the file to them. When you write in this book keep some old photos or letters nearby—they may help spur your memory of awesome moments in your life.



BILL AND BROTHER, LARRY





There Always Are Human Angels Among Us

There always are angels in our lives, people who light the way and ease our burdens.

Early in my life one such angel was my elementary school teacher, Amelia R. DiNallo, who painstakingly taught me to read. Not an easy job indeed.

As a frightened, unconfident, highly anxious child, I just couldn't learn how to read in school. I was getting in my own way, afraid I would fail and reveal my ignorance. My teacher understood this and chose to stay after school day after day coaching me. For weeks, after the other students left she would sit quietly with me in the empty classroom and review the ABCs with me, the sounds they made. She helped me understand how the letters, put together, became words. She was so patient, so encouraging, she calmed me down enough so that I could learn. My teacher believed in me. She understood my fear, and she helped build my confidence each day so that I could finally relax enough to comprehend all that she was showing me. I have never met a kinder person in my life. She was definitely a blessing and awesome.

With my teacher's help I did learn to read well and in doing so saved my fearful young life. In time I became the student who would help teach other students who had difficulty in their subjects. I could understand their struggles because I had been there. Reading well also allowed

me to enter expanded worlds, and, of course, provided entrée to my writing career.

There have been other angels in my life. One was an aged cousin who gave me unconditional love. She loved me simply for who I was. When I first met her as a child she expanded my view of the world into a larg-



er place than the Brooklyn suburb where I was born and reared. An intellectual bohemian from New York's old Greenwich Village, she showed me by example that there were new things to explore, books to

read, art to appreciate and adventures to experience. I can still hear her oft-repeated expressions: "Take a chance—what do you have to lose?"; "Don't be afraid"; "Do what makes you happy"; "Take it easy." These were the words that I desperately needed to hear as I tried new things to expand my limited world.

A third angel in my life is a friend I have known since I was a teen. He is a brother to me. We have laughed together, we have cried together when things went wrong, we have commiserated together about the problems in our lives and those of our children as they struggle to find their footing in life. Over the years my good friend has listened patiently when I have expressed my fears and worries. He has unselfishly always





done his best to reassure and steady me during my illnesses. My life would be far more difficult without him. How fortunate I am to have him for a friend.

Oh, yes, and, then, there was a fourth angel that came into my life, only this one was a child like me, my pigtailed cousin Judy. We had much in common—the same age, she with divorced parents and me with my own folks' marriage painfully unraveling before my eyes. Both of us were lonely and hungry to be loved. Each time Judy visited, she was filled with mischief and high spirits; she never failed to make me—the all too serious, worried little old man who I was back then—giggle and laugh with glee and be playful.

Sometimes we would run to a favorite place, the local pet store, to view the tropical fish which we each collected. Later, when we were beginning to learn Spanish in school, we would write letters to each other in that language, each of us trying to top the other with the new words we were acquiring. We seemed to have so much to say and share, and it is still that way today, too, so many years later. She helped me come through a difficult illness. Looking back now, I see how strong in spirit she was—she just wouldn't let bad things bog her down. That was a good lesson for me. She still is that way today. I admire her strength and courage.

There is an expression I once read, "May his or her memory be for a blessing. "That is what I think of my human angels. Each has been a blessing. How fortunate I am. The human angels in my life were awesome because they helped ease my loneliness and worries, they made me feel safe and loved.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Who are the human angels or heroes in your own life?
What made them so special?

TYPE HERE			

"May you be strong."





The Four C's: Comics, Coloring Books, Crayons and Cartoonists

When I was a boy the happiest day of the week was Sunday when my father ventured out early in the morning and returned with jelly donuts and an armload of

and returned with jelly donate

Sunday newspapers. I would eagerly grab the newspapers from his hands and impatiently, excitedly pull out the color comic sections.

Spreading the funnies on the living room rug, I'd spend the morning going over each strip, following the adventures of my favorite characters—Wonder Woman, Dick Tracy, Little Lulu, Mandrake the Magician, Steve Canyon, Batman. These comics were

my paradise. As I gazed at these glorious colored illustrations, I'd be drawn into their dazzling worlds and accompany my heroes on their adventures. I might fly in the sky or help solve crimes or just be their side-kick. They triggered my imagination—always the place where I was happiest—and made me feel safe in an unstable home. The comics were my weekly salvation, they were a great blessing to me because they cheered me and overrode the sadness that consumed me from family tensions.

If I had been good that week, my father would take me out to buy a new coloring book featuring a comic strip hero, along with a fresh box of Crayola crayons with their beautiful pointed sticks that smelled so richly of wax. A new box of crayons and a new coloring book—just heaven—I lost myself in coloring and experimenting with colors. By coloring in the pages I could concentrate and stop the voices of fear and doubt that ran continually in my mind.

This was also the time when artist Jon Gnagy began his fabulous weekly series on television showing viewers how to draw. I followed him religiously, acquiring colored charcoals and art paper and copied what he showed us on the screen.

Comics have provided me a lifelong blessing and obsession. When I later became a newspaper editor I began working with some of the best cartoonists and artists in the nation to improve the look of my publication. I also began working with one artist, Tom Bloom,



to illustrate my books. We often sat together as he reviewed what I had written, and I'd watch him quickly illustrate my words in sketches. These meetings provided some of the most rewarding, blessed times in my life as Tom's drawings brought my words to life in images. One of these books was called "Make Beliefs: A Gift for Your Imagination," which later evolved into the web site, MakeBeliefsComix.com, where youngsters can create their own digital comic strip stories.

So blessings can come in many forms, including comic strips. Comics are awesome because they make you imagine and smile.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What things are you passionate about that add joy to your life?

I I FE HERE			

Date

"May you be healthy."





Words of I Always Hoped to Hear

Child, you are so loved and so very special. You are so important to our lives."

"May God protect you all of your life, may your journey be a happy one."

"May you have many years of joy and good health."

'May you experience laughter and happiness—and also adventure."

"May you find someone to love who loves you in return with all their heart."

'May you safely scale many mountains in life as you pursue your dreams. May they come true."

"May you help make the world better."

"You are a blessing to our lives."

Each of us should remember, too, to offer blessings

of love and good will to others. There are never enough blessings to go around. Life can be so lonely and hard, and we need to offer and receive whatever loving words we can. And when you express kindness to others, you are awesome.







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What is the blessing you would like to receive or offer someone you love?
What good words would you like to hear which have meaning for your life?

TYPE HERE			

"May you have much joy in life."





Planting "Dream Seeds" for Hope

he simple act of planting has been one of the biggest blessings in my life. Growing up in a home filled with turmoil and unhappiness I have always planted seeds to gain a sense of hope for the future. Seeing them grow makes me feel awe.



I remember as a boy spending hours admiring the flowers pictured on the covers of the spring seed packets, and wondering whether I, too, could grow such beautiful flowers. I worried, for example, whether I would have enough sunlight for them in my kitchen window or fire escape. You see, I always lived in apartment houses and had no plot of land for a garden. I would grow my seeds in cheese boxes which I filled with store-bought soil and placed on the window sill. Later, when the seeds sprouted, I would move the boxes to the fire escape for more sun.

I'd carefully read the instructions on the seed packs, searching for flowers that I thought would grow best. In late winter and early spring I would drop my seeds into the wooden

boxes and imagine the gold marigolds or the blue-violet morning glories or xenias that in summer would fill the boxes.

I loved the planting process itself, from preparing the earth, to mixing and aerating the soil, to sprinkling water over the dirt. I loved the smell and touch of the earth into which I buried my hands

and made holes for the seeds.
When I planted, my hands

would tremble a little with excitement as I dropped the seeds into holes made in the dirt. This reflected the intensity of hope I felt. I could visualize the seeds germinating and starting their growth. I anticipated that something beautiful would, in time, come forth from the earth.

Each morning I'd water the boxes and search for the blessed first green shoots. But I worried, too. Sometimes the building's landlord would knock on our door to tell us to remove the cheese boxes from the sunny fire escape because they were a fire hazard. In doing so, I'd take care not to break the stems of the morning glories which had twined around the bars of the fire escape. I'd then wait until the landlord left the neighborhood and put the plants back—I wasn't going to let my dreams and my beautiful plants die. How wonderful it was—a miracle, in fact—to think that I could play a role in helping the seeds come to life.

Seeing the first sprouts soothed me. They made me happy and gave me hope that things would be better for my parents who were troubled by financial and marital problems. The green shoots made me believe that in the weeks ahead, beauty would come into my family's lives in the form of colorful flowers. Knowing that good things like this would happen was awesome because it eased some of the fears I always felt as a child: the fear that we wouldn't be able to pay the rent; that we'd be thrown out of our home, or that my parents would begin their fighting again.

Now, so many years later, I have come to realize that this act of planting was actually a very empowering thing for a young boy to do because it gave me a sense of control over at least one thing—and that was helping to bring forth life into the world.

Later in life when I became a father, my tiny daughter would



16 STORIES OF AWE

help me plant, mixing the soil together with humus in kitchen pots as we prepared new plants and seedlings that together we could watch grow on our window sill or hang on window frames. During our planting sessions, my daughter would chat away and tell me some of her stories and her hopes and dreams too. Not only were we planting seedlings, but we were planting all the seeds of love between father and daughter that would bear rich fruit over the years.

I can still see my daughter mixing the loam and soil with a soup spoon in a huge soup pot and spilling more on the kitchen floor than into the planters where she would place the seedlings. I can still see her smiling and talking a mile a minute, this little living dream of mine as she made a wonderful mess. That indeed was a blessing, too.

Throughout my life I have planted other kinds of "dream seeds" that I hoped would blossom along the way. These were the dreams to have a college education; to find someone to love and raise a family with; to see my daughter grow into a fine human being; to have good work to do and of which I could be proud; to bring my ideas into the world by writing books and building a great newspaper, and to help others make better lives for themselves.

I planted these seeds in my heart. Some took longer than others to grow and bear fruit. Not all the dream seeds grew the way I had hoped. Some came to full flower and bloomed, some were delayed in growth, and some have taken longer than others to bear fruit. A few withered and died along the way, to be replaced by other dream seeds. But planting these different seeds always gave me hope to live and enjoy my life. A beautiful, flourishing garden can take a lifetime of planting and nurturing, so have patience in growing your own dreams.







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What things do you do that have always given you hope in your own life?
What dream seeds will you plant?

TYPE HERE

"May you find peace within you."





Prayer—A Constant Companion

When I was a little boy I used to pray to God each night asking Him to stop my mother and father from arguing and to please keep our family together. I was so afraid our family would fall apart.

Not having come from a religious family, I have no idea how I even learned to pray. But maybe because I was so lonely and so fearful of my family's dissolution that I just naturally came to God and to prayer. As a child I was powerless to keep my family together. I needed help badly. So, I did the only thing that I could do, I prayed and asked for help.

Each night after going to bed and lying in the darkness I asked God if He loved me. I would say to him, "I love you. Do you love me?" I would ask this several times, even spell out the letters of the sentences, "I l-o-v-e y-o-u. D-o y-o-u l-o-v-e m-e?" I don't know why I did this. Did the rhythm of the sentences or the tapping out the letters of the sentences comfort me and create a spell of peace? Who knows?

And then other words would come to my mind as I spoke tearfully to God. "God, please stop my parents from arguing. Please, I beg you, make them love each other again. God, please keep my family together.

Please end our family's money problems. Stop my father from gambling all his money away and getting into debt. Don't let us fall apart. What will happen then?"

And then I would even bargain with God. "God, I'll be a good boy. God, I'll love you if you love me and keep the family together. God, I am frightened by all the fighting of my parents. God, will we have enough money? Will we be evicted from our home and thrown on the street?" (I still remember one time when we hadn't paid the rent for a while and the landlord knocked on our door. My father quickly gathered my mother, brother and me into a closet so that the landlord wouldn't hear that we were at home and go away. How frightening that experience was! I can never forget it and the first bill I pay each month now is for rent.)

Night after night I communicated with God, repeating



the same words, asking the same questions. But, no response would come. Things stayed the same, but I kept hoping for better.



Perhaps what I really was seeking from God was a blessing, that He would always watch over my family and me, that he would protect us and not let my family fall apart. But the blessing I sought never materialized the way I had hoped, and in time the situation between my parents deteriorated so badly that they divorced and the family did collapse.

Today, so many years later, I wonder how my life would have changed if God had indeed granted me the blessing of a peaceful, secure family life. Would I have developed into a much happier and confident person? Would I be less afraid?

Still, I made my own blessing in the form of a silent pledge that one day I would have my own family and be a good father and husband: I would create the loving family I always yearned for as a child. And later on I did do my best to protect and care for my own family. So while my childhood pleas to God were not granted back then as I had hoped, they eventually came true for me when I became a husband and father and I blessed my own family with all my love and devotion.

I look back and think that the prayers I made as a boy were awe-making because they gave a little boy some hope when he badly needed it.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What is a prayer or spiritual message which you have said from time to time?

TYPE HERE
Date

"May you always believe in yourself."





Baby Chicks and Kind Strangers

ne year when I was eight or nine, and it was the week before Easter, I saw baby chicks being sold in the pet store. I wanted so much to hold and touch them with their tiny golden bodies. With the money I had saved from my allowance, I purchased a half dozen chicks to take home and raise in my bedroom—I was so eager to have a living creature to love and nurture. It was as if I looked to the animals to fill me with love.

I built an incubator from a cardboard box and put a lamp in it to keep the chicks warm. They seemed to thrive, but then I soon realized how much work it was to take care of them in the small bedroom I shared with my brother Larry and what a mess they made. My mother didn't like the smell and thought it unhealthy for us to live with the chickens in our small space. So, on Easter Sunday I took the chicks and waited outside a church until the service was over and people came out the door. There I gave away the chicks free to those who wanted one and who said they would provide a good home.

This was awe-inspiring for me to learn about how kind and generous the people were in accepting the chicks and giving them homes. I had made a mistake in buying them and trying to raise them in a small apartment, but the kind people, these gentle strangers, had turned this into a blessing by unselfishly taking the chicks off my hands and providing a home for them. What is it they say? It takes a community to raise a child (or baby chick).





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What have you learned from a mistake or failure?
Was there someone who had your back?

TYPE HERE
-

"May you never take 'no' as an answer."





Please Say the Important Words

Early in my life I lost three people whom I loved—my father, my grandmother and my grandfather. Each died before they were able to give my brother and me a blessing that would see us off on our lives into the future.

My father, after suffering a stroke in his forties, soon died in a coma, amid an array of life-supporting devices connected to every orifice in his body. He lay naked on his hospital bed which was covered by a plastic tent, and seemed to be unaware of anyone or anything in the room. I watched him die; I was 17 and devastated by his early death.

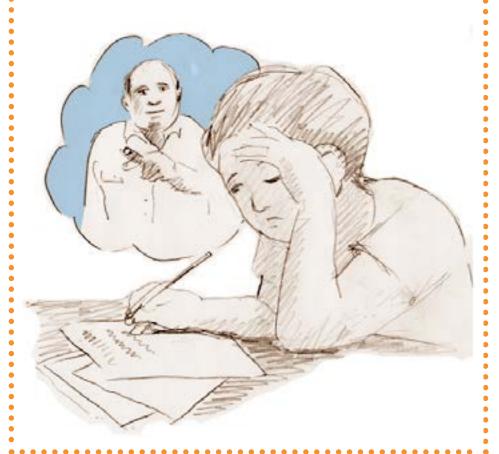
I wish it had not been this way, that we could have spoken and that he had more time to be with my brother and me or to say some loving last words to us. For many years after his death I sought out my father, hoping to hear from him, to smell him, to touch and embrace him.

I even remember one time before Father's Day, in an attempt to ease the longing I felt for him I wrote a letter from "him" to me in which I had him say all the things I wanted and needed to hear. In the letter I had him say that he loved me and that he was proud of the person I

had become. Perhaps, in penning that letter from "him" to me, I was also giving a blessing to myself. I felt at peace—he was with me again for a little while.

One other thing: I learned from losing my father so early the importance of expressing words of blessing and love to my own daughter so that she always knew she was cherished and protected. Never hesitate to say the loving words to the people dear to you. When you do so, you are awesome.







LETTER BILL WROTE "FROM HIS FATHER"

Dear Son Bill,

I miss you and your brother Larry.

I am so sorry I was not around with you as you were growing up.

But I want to tell you now how proud I am with how you have lived your life and accomplished. You should be very proud, too.

I miss you very much, too, but you are always in my heart and soul.

With all my love,

Dad





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Write about an important person in your life, whether someone who is still present or who is lost to you.

(It can be in the form of a letter to that person if you like. Begin with Dear...)

	TYPE HERE			
_				

"May you find a loving partner in life."





A Little Furry Blessing

When my daughter was little, I took her to the ASPCA to look for a dog we might adopt. She immediately spotted a mangy-looking, tan-colored creature with the saddest eyes. It was love at first sight for girl and dog, although I advised my daughter to first look around more, to be sure she was choosing the right pet. But, she stood firm and wanted (despite my reservations) only this forlorn little animal. She named her "Dynamite."

We took her home and in time with my daughter's care and affection Dynamite thrived, turned beautiful, and became a key member of our household. You see, Dynamite knew that she was loved by my daughter and that she was protected and cared for. For almost 18 years Dynamite was best friend to my once-lonely child and was general family comforter.

Some years later when my daughter left for college I took over caring for our now elderly pet. This loving creature saw me through some of the worst times of my life—the loss of my brother and mother, the loss of a job, my battle with depression. She was constantly there sitting at my feet, ready to lick my hand or face, comforting me with her presence and patience. So kind, so beautiful, so giving. I even wrote a book about what I had learned from her.



This little dog was a blessing to our family and she never failed us. She taught us how to love more fully and unselfishly. I miss her so. Her blessing to us is still in my heart. Sharing her life was a long experience with awe.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Has there been a living creature who made a difference in your life?

How so?

I TPE NEKE

Date _____

"May you scale the mountains in your path."





From Little Plastic Doll to Cherished, Blessed Baby

a tiny plastic baby doll at the Five & Dime store. I hid it in an empty matchbox with my other little treasures because being a boy I was ashamed of owning a doll. But I knew instinctively that the doll was very important to me. I wanted to love it. I wanted a tiny baby like it. I wanted to love the plastic baby the way I wanted to be loved—fully, deeply.

I think I also wanted a real baby to love and nurture because I felt unloved and alone. You may know the expression—you give what you need most. I needed love and comfort at the time, living in a family where my parents were so preoccupied with their own problems.

Later in life, grown up, I married a wonderful, loving woman,

and in time we had a daughter.
It was so easy to love our child.
Finally, I had a real little baby to cherish, my childhood dream. She was the delayed blessing who finally entered my life. This

showed me, I guess, that while we might not get all the blessings we want when we need them, we do have a chance to get some of them in time. So awesome to hold such a tiny, warm blessing in my arms. Oh, baby of mine!







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What was your most cherished possession as a child, the one that meant the world to you and which you wish you still had?

What is the possession you now have that is meaningful to you?

·

"May you always have hopes and dreams.







Latchkey Boy

As a boy he was given a key to the door To be able to come and go as he pleased when no one was home.

to the Door

It was a big deal to have his own key

and he carried it around with him like some talisman. Knowing he had the key made him feel safe and confident, He was aware he was being trusted with the family's security. The boy would hide the key in his pocket and rub it warm with his hand.

Sometimes he put the key in his mouth to taste its metallic juices,

Sometimes he dressed the key with a rabbit's foot on a small chain,

Other times he put it on a ring.

The boy handled the key with great care, and at school would reach into his pocket to make sure it was still there, not lost.

The key gave him unfettered entrance to the warmth of his home when no one was there.

The key was his protection from the outside world.

And he was glad to have a few hours to himself as he waited for his mother to come from work.

The latchkey unlocked safety and staved off fear and worry. So thin and golden, like a cool slice of yellow, so light in his hand It was like having an extended finger with power to reveal.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What special object do you have that makes you feel special and courageous?

TYPE HERE
Date
"May you have no regrets."





Escaping on A Green Schwinn Bike

My escapes from home began in my ninth year when my parents bought me a beautiful green and white Schwinn bicycle, something I had long dreamed about. I was finally able to breathe free of family problems as I pedaled my bike around the neighborhood and beyond.

The happiest times were after school. I began hesitantly. At first, I'd go around the block many times, feeling the breeze on my face, hearing the swoosh of the tires over the pavement, experiencing the exhilaration of being able to fly away.

Soon I spread my excursions wider. I explored more distant, strange neighborhoods, even areas where there were groups of wild dogs that might chase me. I biked miles from my Brooklyn home to go to Coney Island. I liked seeing new neighborhoods because they broadened my limited world. It was fascinating to see where other people lived, the types of houses they lived in, the gardens they kept, and the stores where they shopped.

Most of all I liked the freedom of the road. I could break from the limits my mother set for me: I could escape all her warnings about going outside the neighborhood. For her, the world was a dangerous place and her worries inhibited me.

I wanted freedom.

I never told my parents how far I wandered. All this to say that the heavy green and white Schwinn bicycle was a blessing for a young boy. It made me more confident. Just that brief escape from the confines of home was awesome.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

When have you felt most free in spirit? What was it like?

TYPE HERE			

Date			

"May you persist in all your endeavors."





Love of Music

Music has always been awe-inspiring.

I first became aware of how much pleasure music could bring when as a young boy I would visit my aunt and uncle on Sunday mornings. Their home was a safe place for me—no fighting, no tensions. They always had the radio on, usually listening to pop tunes on Make Believe Ballroom.

A popular song back then was "I'll be Seeing You," a song for parting lovers during World War II (my uncle had been a soldier). While the music played in their tiny apartment they would dance and sing and laugh. It was a joy to share their happiness.



At that time, too, Your Hit Parade was a popular TV program featuring singers performing the top songs of the week. I still remember "That's Amore", "Stranger in Paradise", "Secret Love", "Oh My Pa-Pa" anwd "'Heart of my Heart." Soon, as a teen, I began going to Saturday night parties and dancing to such greats as The Platters' "My Prayer" and, of course, "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Halley and The Comets. The music freed me; it took me out of myself. My high school dance partner and I even began entering local dance contests and won "best dancers" title on a popular after-school teen TV program. And, of course, there was the dazzling phenomenon of Elvis Presley and the enchanting singing of beautiful folk singer Joan Baez.

I remember, too, that for our birthdays, my parents would sometimes take my brother and me to see a Broadway show. I vividly recall wonderful music from Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The King and I" with Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner. Sheer joy. The music made me happy and touched every emotion.

I started collecting records seriously in high school. I'd see ads in magazines to join mail order music clubs which offered a set of free records just for joining; in return you'd agree to buy a certain number of recordings each month. I would drop out of the club before the time came when I had to order records as part of the deal, and I was allowed to keep the free records they had mailed. That way I acquired Beethoven Symphonies with Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra. I also discovered Bach's glorious Brandenburg Concertos

and Handel's Water Music. Until then I had never heard such beautiful music; these recordings became a source of beauty and inspiration in my life. They comforted me greatly through my father's death the year I graduated from high school and entered college.

I continued to collect classical music: Andres Segovia playing Bach on his guitar, Pablo Casals offering Bach's Cello Suites. Their music transported me. Then came the opening of the giant Tower Records stores where you could purchase any music tape cassette or CD you wanted. I spent many wonderful Saturday afternoons in these stores looking to discover a new piece of music. Simply heaven! Such a shame when they closed.

Above all, Bach was always the Master—he was my god and could do no wrong. His music is a miracle. I'd play his recordings early in the morning as I prepared for my workday; it was like praying. And, in the evening I'd listen to Bach again to help me recharge from the rigors and pressures of newspaper work and tight deadlines.

To this day Bach continues to raise my spirits and help calm my worries as I struggle to find my footing. His music is a blessing that never diminishes; rather, his awesomeness grows in my life.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Which music or song is important to you? What memories are evoked?

TYPE HERE
D-1-

"May you not be afraid to take a chance"





The Blessing of Work -- Yes, Work

have always loved to work, to have a goal to strive toward.

As a kid I loved homework. An anxious child, I also felt deep down that there was good stuff in me, that I could be strong, too, and overcome my fears through determination and hard work. School assignments provided structure and meaning to my life, and gave me some distance from the family chaos. In fact, the more challenging the homework assignments were, the happier I was. All I wanted was to lose myself from the chaotic world of my family and enter a better one where I could focus on thinking and testing my abilities. The work was a way for me to express myself.

Working to prepare for the next school day, I could block some of the fighting at home and immerse myself in something meaningful—my ideas and imagination. My teacher would assign a book report, and, instead of handing in one or two pages, I would turn in eight or nine pages, often replete with drawings about what I had read. I learned to take great pride in my work. I wanted to be the best. I wanted the teacher's approval, I wanted my parents' approval. And most of all I wanted my own approval, to know that I had succeeded and done my best.

Later on, my work as a journalist and author became even more important for me. I could pour myself in something greater than myself. In my writing I was able to come to terms with all the sadness, all the fears, all the anger and despair in my soul. I could create something new, something better. Work—writing—enabled me to learn from the people I met and interviewed as a reporter and give voice to what was buried within. Writing enabled me to articulate the song within me, to overcome my quiet-





ness. I began writing books to deal with my pain and fears and tears, and to make connections with others who might read them. **I wanted to have a voice and be heard.**

Working was also my way of dealing with my depression which had been compounded by the early death of my father. I am fortunate to be one of those people who seem

to deal with problems through their work. I remember one dreadful year when I lost my brother, then my mother. That same year I lost my job, my wife lost her job, and my daughter morphed into an angry teenager. It seemed everything was going wrong. The one sustaining factor was my dedication to the work of finding a new job. To that end, before beginning my search each morning I first took time to write prayers asking God for love and help and sustenance to continue and not give up. Writing the prayers gave me strength and courage. Writing, as always, was my way of praying. (Those written prayers became "The Little Book of Joy.")



That year, and for many which followed, I worked my way back to stability in the same way that I overcame each illness. Work always has been one of the most awesome blessings in my life. I thank God for this. I pray for strength to continue this way.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there work you have done that has added meaning to your life or that of others?

What have you accomplished or want to accomplish?

TYPE HERE

. .

Date

"May you always listen to the voice inside you which knows the truth."





Possessing A Box of Wonder

When I was a boy I had a box of wonder that gave me much pleasure. It was a small, white cardboard box with a cotton layer on the bottom which had once held my mother's costume jewelry. Into this box I would place tiny treasures I had found—a bird's feather plucked from my father's fedora; a rhinestone which had fallen out of my mother's broach; a pair of green-colored dice; a cufflink that belonged to my dad; a white pebble I had found at the beach; a very tiny baby doll that I had bought at the Five & Dime; a beautiful postage stamp. Time and again I would open this box to gaze at these and other wonderful finds. These small objects made me feel happy and safe—they were

awesome in their beauty and the memories they evoked.

I can recall sitting on the wooden floor playing with the

treasure box; the sun is streaming in from the window on this spring day, and for once it is quiet at home. My parents have gone downstairs and I am alone for a little while. I am



happy in the sun-dappled peace. I exult in my freedom, in the serenity, in the rare absence of my parents' recriminations and screaming. I am at peace with myself as I review my treasures. The sun soon makes me sleepy, and I rest my head on the floor and fall asleep...That is a blessing, that is awesome.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What objects would you place in your own box of wonder? Even now?

TYPE HERE

"May someone kind extend a hand to you."



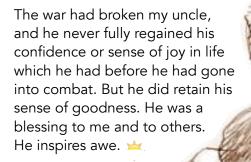


A Loving Uncle

remember a happy time when I was a boy: my uncle Morris (whom everyone called Mershie) had come safely home from war and my mother made a party for family and friends to celebrate his homecoming. Everyone was happy—my uncle was so loved because of his goodness and sweet temperament.

My uncle Mershie and I sat together in the living room, carefully gazing at a painting depicting a mysterious, ancient castle in an enchanted forest. He started telling me a story about the picture, about the people who lived in the castle, what kind of country it was in, who lived in the woods, why everything looked so mysterious.

I loved hearing the stories he made up and felt so much love from him, it was awesome. He encouraged me to use my imagination to create a story with him about what we were looking at and all the possibilities. My gentle and kind uncle, who had suffered so much in the war, made me feel safe and loved as he weaved his story. I can still recall the sweet smell of his shaving lotion.







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Who was the person or persons who had a strong influence on you or made a difference in your life?

How did they do so?

Are you that way with someone, too?

TYPE HERE

Date _____

"May you bring goodness and beauty to the world."





The Local Library, the Palace of Dreams

Books and the public library provided salvation and the best blessing that could be bestowed on a child. When I was very young my mother, an avid reader, would take me to the local library where a kind and gentle librarian read and told stories to the children. She provided an enchanted world for me. I fell in love with her because of her welcoming smile and beautiful reading voice, the sparkle in her eyes as she read.

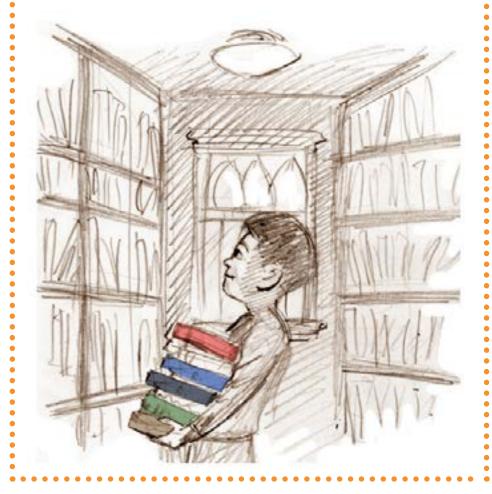


Such golden afternoons after school. The librarian's love of storytelling transported me to other worlds. After her readings, she often would recommend some new book for me to borrow with my mother's well-worn library card. The librarian allowed me to choose books from all sections of the library. She knew how hungry I was to read and learn about the world.

When I grew older, I'd go by myself to the library each Friday afternoon after school to gather a new selection of books for the weekend. I loved having my own library card and carried home an armload of books to keep me engaged during the weekend's two schoolless days. I so dreaded the weekends when my parents were together and would start arguing. With these books, I was able, in part, to shut out the angry noise by concentrating on a book.

I loved reading the tales of King Arthur and his knights, the Tarzan adventures and the books about Dr. Doolittle who spoke to animals in their languages. I read and reread the tales of ancient Greek mythology. I also had a beautiful Golden Treasury of Bible Stories with glorious illustrations and would often turn to its beautiful pages. I wanted to live in their times.

I also remember how proud my mother was of our family bookcase which held the collected works of Charles Dickens



and a set of other great works of literature. It would be years before I had the reading skills to tackle some of those books, but the pride with which my mother regarded the book collection inspired me to eventually read them as time passed and to build my own library. The ability to read can only be described as awesome.



Reading was and is my lifeblood. 🗠





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Was there a book or story that made a world of difference for you? How?

TYPE HERE

"May you be deeply loved."





Listening to Family Tales

On some Saturday evenings, my mother and father would entertain in our apartment. Family members would come to these parties and there would be boisterous talk and energy in the air. My parents would be on good behavior with one another, as if they were again as happy as they once were. With my relatives all gathered in one place, I felt safe and protected.



I would listen to my relatives as they laughed and told stories. Sometimes, I would sit under the kitchen table listening to the stories about their lives or about old family events and history. They seemed to be filled with love and happy memories. Much boisterous laughter.

I remember hearing the story about my maternal great grandmother who was a peddler of women's goods on New York's Lower East Side and how she would stretch the spools of elastic she sold in order to eke out a few extra cents from each spool.

I recall the story of how my mother's family during the Great Depression would hold Saturday night vaudeville shows in which each member of the family would dance or sing or act. My grandmother and grandfather would wear each other's clothes and sing and dance.

I remember my grandfather talking about coming to this



country from Europe on a perilous sea voyage. He would recall how he met my grandmother at a millinery factory where they both made women's hats. He told us that my grandmother wasn't a very good sewer—her job at the factory was to sew flowers and ribbons on the hats. But, he said laughing with love, she would sew them on and five minutes later they always seemed to fall off. He had a sewing machine in his home and would make beautiful hats for my mother to wear on Easter and Passover.

My aunt recalled how my grandmother spoiled her youngest son Herbert, the baby in the family. Living on the sixth floor of a building she would look out the window and watch as he played stickball. Often, she would run down to the street with a glass of chocolate milk in her hand so he wouldn't be thirsty and would have energy to play.



I loved hearing the stories and the sounds of the people as they spoke at family get-togethers. Their happy voices calmed me and helped me feel safe and protected. Life's unpleasantness, its risks, its hardships, its precariousness would be put off for a while. This was a blessing to me, worried child that I was.

As the evening wore on I would often fall asleep under the table and someone would put me to sleep in my bed. From these family gatherings, I developed my love of listening to peoples' stories and as a grownup wrote the book "How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies" which teaches how to record family stories and histories. The stories I heard are just awesome.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there a family story or legend you'd like to recall and share?

TYPE HERE

"May you always have a roof over your head.





Sunday Lunches at Mary's Restaurant

Sometimes on Sunday afternoons when my father had some extra money in his pocket he would take my mother, brother and me, my aunt and uncles and sometimes my grandfather to a small neighborhood Italian restaurant called Mary's. There was wonderful food for the body (my favorite being spaghetti and meatballs) and great stories for the soul.

Such delicious feasts. And, at least for a few hours we took joy in one another's company. During these hours, surrounded by others, my mother and father would be on good behavior and call a truce to their fighting. These dinners were a blessing because they made the difficulties of family life a little easier to accept. They showed me there could be good times, too, and offered some hope that maybe my parents could rediscover the love they once shared and then my family could finally live in peace and love. Such wishful thinking!



You see, for a little while during these dinners I felt safe with family members gathered in this old restaurant. I felt reas-



sured by their talk and laughter. There was a sense of community, that somehow the family was united and that we each loved one another. Mary's was a blessed place to me. The comradery I felt those Sunday afternoons was awesome.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there a particular place you go to in your own life which always makes you feel happy and at peace?

I YPE HERE

Date -

"May you have enough to eat."





My Father's Comforting Me and A Memory Haunting Me

For a while when I was very young, I suffered leg pain that would sometimes wake me up sobbing in the middle of the night. At those times my father, who I am sure was tired from having worked long hours in a fur factory, would hasten to my room to help comfort me. No matter the hour, he would gently rub my legs and try to soothe the pain. This always helped.

Perhaps it was his presence, more than the rubbing, which did the trick. My father, who spent so little time at home with his family, lovingly had cared for me and given me his attention, something I desperately hungered for. I didn't feel so alone with my pain. His presence conveyed love to me, which was awesome. And I felt the same way the times when at dinner he would give me a taste of the food from his plate, or when he would kiss me when he came home tired after work, or when on Sunday mornings we set out for the local candy store so I could choose a comic or book. For that little while we were together. Those moments stay with me.



Doesn't love make everything better?

P.S. There's a long P.S. here about mixed feelings: I realize now that I really never understood my father and resented the fact that he would leave our home most nights after dinner to be with his friends, galavanting or gambling. It got so bad at times he had to borrow from loan sharks. One time we didn't have enough money to pay the rent and I feared we would be evicted. I remember the landlord knocking at our door to collect payment and my father taking my mother, brother and me into a closet and putting his finger to his mouth signalling to us not to make a sound. This way, the landlord would think no one was home and then leave. He did. This is indeed a terrible memory.

I know my father loved us all, but somehow we were never enough for him. Perhaps because as a boy he had been placed in an orphanage after his own mother died and was so crippled by this experience that he could not really understand what went into our being a family. He separated from my mother when I was 14; soon they





divorced. In the last years of his relatively young life he was very ill and died the year I turned 17. I really didn't have that much of him, but as I think back now I realize that the scattered good times I did have with him were blessed and awesome. They helped sustain me through my growing years. I tried to become the man I wanted him to be. I still miss him so.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Who was the person who always has come to your rescue? How? When? Who is there now for you?

TYPE HERE

"May you always feel safe and protected."

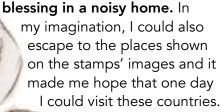




Collecting Stamps and Seeing the World

When I was a boy my uncle Herbert helped me start my own postage stamp collection. I would correspond with stamp companies that sold cancelled stamps from around the world. This way I learned about many foreign countries from the types of stamps that I discovered. My favorites were the colorful ones from the emerging African countries, such as Tanganyika (today known as Tanzania) whose stamps displayed the most beautiful wild animals and flowers. I wondered about the historic people whose images were printed on the stamps.

I loved pasting the stamps on their hinges into the book and seeing many of the pages fill up with color. I remember buying a thick Scott stamp catalog which featured the most important stamps in the world; it showed photographs and information for each, including the value of each stamp listed. I took such pride in my collection. **This** hobby provided hours of peace and contemplation, a



Years later I did go around the world – and it was, as you expect, awesome. 📥





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Have you had a special hobby or interest that always engages you? Why is it so important to you? What do you learn from it?

	TYPE HERE	

"May you have good work to do."





My Mother Performs Blessings

One time when I was very young my mother's cousin Philip came to visit and to eat a meal she had cooked for him. It was said he was ill and had suffered a nervous breakdown from serving in the war; he couldn't get his life together. He was a quiet, gentle man, happy to be with my mother, to taste her cooking, to hear her stories. He was in need of comfort. By welcoming him to our home, she gave him an

afternoon of security and serenity.

What I most remember from those days was my mother's loving kindness to her cousin. She made him feel welcome and loved. I regard this as a blessing which she performed for another human. Her action showed me the importance of being



kind and patient with others who are in need—and that includes everyone at some point in life.

Here's another memory of my mother's kindness: when she had what she called enough "table money" to feed the family, my mother would take me with her to the butcher. There she would buy meat and poultry both for our immediate family and also for her sisters who had little money. At home she'd separate the meat into little bundles to give to each of her sisters. My mother taught me generosity of spirit and to share what I had whether it was a little or a lot. Her kindness was a blessing and an awesome lesson to me.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Who is the kindest person you know? How do they show their kindness? What kind acts does the world need?

TYPE HERE

"May smiles and laughter be there in your life."





Olivia's Singing "You Are My Sunshine"

When I was a little boy, a woman named Olivia would come to our home once a month to help my mother clean the apartment from top to bottom. She loved to sing; I would follow Olivia around the house as she did her work. Often, as she washed the windows and blinds she would sing to me my favorite song, "You Are My Sunshine." The song's words and Olivia's beautiful voice always made me feel happy and treasured. Her singing to me was awesome.

The woman was so kind—she always had a smile on her face for me, she made me feel cheerful and carefree. All throughout my life the words from the song, and the image of Olivia's singing, still come to my mind and help light my days.







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Who has given you special and loving attention in your life?
What did they do?

TYPE HERE

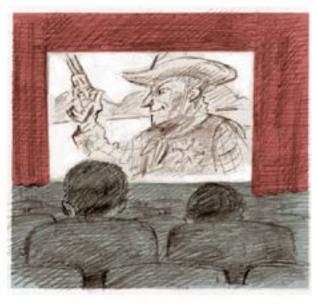
"May you make time to dance and sing."





Golden Saturdays at the Movies

n Saturday afternoons. I would go to the movies with my brother, Larry. This was a weekly blessing. We'd watch comedies. musicals, cowboy and pirate movies and tons of alorious cartoons. All these fed my imagination. Our mother would pack a paper bag



with sandwiches and fruit to tide us over. I felt safe and content in the dark theater. **As I watched the moving pictures, my cares would melt away.** Many of the movies at the time were in black and white, so the technicolor films always were a treat when they were shown from time to time.



Some days, when the afternoon movies were over, my brother and I would hide in the men's room and later slink back into the seats to watch the first showing of the grown-up movies in the evenings. I'd worry that the usher would catch us and throw us out, but most times we managed to stay because I looked old for my age. Oh, those blessed Saturday afternoons at the movies. They were awesome.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there a magical place that always captures your imagination and takes you into a new world? Which movie would you like to enter?

TYPE HERE

"May you help heal the world."



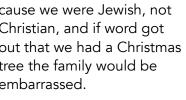


The Miracle of A Tiny Plug-In Christmas Tree

One Christmas, when I was very young, my parents bought my brother and me a small, two-foot high Christmas tree that lit up when you plugged it into the wall outlet. It was magical and enchanting with its glowing colorful lights. The tree was placed on a night table next to my bed so I could look at it as I fell to sleep. My parents told

me not to tell anyone in our building about the tree because we were Jewish, not Christian, and if word got out that we had a Christmas tree the family would be embarrassed.

The sparkling lights on the tree were so beautiful and always made me happy. It seemed that nothing bad in the world could happen while they were on. We had this little tree for many years. I can still see it now and wish I still had this little blessed tree. I would plug it in every night to help me go to sleep. It would be awesome to feel so safe again, gazing at a small plug-in Christmas tree by my bed. 📥









Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Do you have a Christmas or holiday story to tell?

TYPE HERE
Date

"May people be generous to you."





When I March, I Am Part of A Community

hinking back over the years, I remember the moments of awe when I overcame my fears and marched with hundreds of thousands of other people demonstrating for a better world.

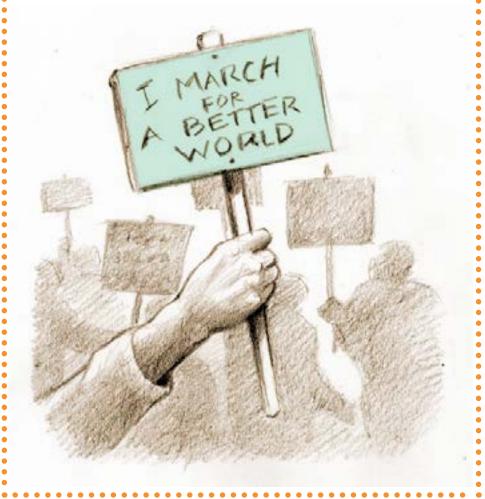
My first time was the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 where a young minister, Martin Luther King Jr., climbed the marble steps of the Lincoln Memorial to deliver his stirring, memorable "I Have a Dream" speech. It protested the systemic disenfranchisement of Black Americans and successfully led to passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

How can I ever forget when Reverend King exclaimed, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by their character."

As a Jew how can I not weep at his words, "When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every tenement and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'" His words soared that day,

and so did the people in the crowd. I was better for hearing them.

I had gone to Washington with some fear in my heart that there might be violence that day, that people of different beliefs might attack one another—but thank God that never happened. Instead, I learned that people can mobilize peacefully for their rights and to fight for what they believe in. I think with awe of the kindness and respect that people showed to one another that day, the tears of joy and hope



that they shed. We were all in this together, wanting the same good things.

There were other marches in which I participated—the Anti-Vietnam War protest in Washington in 1969, the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation in 1993 which I attended with my daughter who was then in college, and the protests against the Iraq War in 2003 when I marched in New York City.

Those marches accomplished great things, but I still wonder: Will we ever be free at last? Will there ever be peace? Will there ever be love and kindness shared by all of us at last?

As we carry on, all I know is that we must always carry King's dreams in our hearts.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What do you believe in so strongly that you would march and demonstrate for it? What is so important to you that you can find the strength to overcome your fears and fight for what you believe?

TYPE HERE
Date

"May you take pleasure in each new day.





The Healing Swimming Pool

ften in the early morning, sometimes while it is still dark out I leave home and walk a couple of blocks to a small, heated indoor swimming pool. Sometimes I limp there with physical pain, other times I carry with me my problems and the burdens of the world. But once I ease into the warm, therapeutic water, I begin to breathe more freely and deeply; my pain subsides. As I start walking slowly in the water or buoy myself with flotation tubes my problems seem to float away. I just try to feel and not think, and yet often creative solutions to some of my problems come unbidden.

Then I begin swimming and become my happiest, freest self. I want to be a frog man and live in the water all day long. The freedom I feel swimming is extraordinary and I am thrilled by the beauty of how easily my body and limbs function in water. Swimming must be like flying in the air, I imagine.



I become emotional in this tiny pool. Sometimes as I walk in the water tears come to my eyes as my deepest cares manifest themselves and when my sadness rises up. At these times I seek comfort and surcease from my tribulations. I begin to pray, I begin to hope. By the time I leave the pool I usually have found some peace.

In essence, this little heated pool is my daily blessing to myself. It is my special time when the warm water comforts and liberates me. Water is an awesome gift.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Which activity adds joy and happiness to your life and creates a sense of well being?

TYPE HERE

"May you discover the wisdom in you."





Coming Through Illness

When I send birthday greetings to people I love, I always send them blessing wishes for good health in their new year. It is perhaps the best wish I can give them. I say this as someone who has undergone radiation and chemotherapy to deal

with my infirmities and as a caregiver to my wife who also has experienced serious illnesses in recent years.

In confronting our illnesses my wife and I have done our best to support and help one another through the physical

and emotional challenges. Our love has grown even more intense. Recognizing the fragility of life, and how things can change so suddenly for the worse, we have greater appreciation for one another than we had before our illnesses and we realize how blessed our time together is. (Sometimes, when I feel ill, my wife with sweet voice sings me to sleep—what a kind, loving blessing this is to me.)

When illness assaults your life, you quickly learn to relish the blessings of each new day. It is a blessing for the two of us to still be together after so many decades. Despite the pain and fears, we, and our love, have survived and flourished. Indeed, that is the greatest blessing we could ever have been granted.





Dealing with illness opened my eyes to how much good is in our lives, how blessed we are despite the frailties each of us inevitably experiences. Every day holds a new joy to be discovered and unveiled. And it has inspired me to write this book of blessings stories, to acknowledge life's wonders and to encourage you to express the blessings in your heart to those you love.

I sing Hallelujah. It is awesome to be alive. What do you sing? 📥





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

How have you coped with illness, whether your own or someone else's whom you love?

How have you gotten through this event?

TYPE HERE	

"May you find healing waters."





Holding A Tiny Hand

ne of the biggest blessings in my life has been fathering my daughter.

You learn so many things holding the tiny hand of a child as you both make your way in the world. Things like learning how to slow down and take time to look closely at the wonders around you, the tiny insects and beautiful flowers, even the cracks in the sidewalk or puddles waiting to be splashed. You soon discover that a child always makes time to chase after pigeons and butterflies or feed the ducks, and you learn that you can, too.

As you both talk you begin to think again about why birds sing or why the sky is blue or where fairies come from. You begin to see things from the perspective of someone who is 30 inches tall and become reacquainted with all the small, wonderful things that you had forgotten or been taking for granted in the years before this perfect child arrived in your life.

Having a child gave my wife and me a new life, a second chance to restore the happiness which had been missing from our own early lives when we were children, and to allow us to enter a new stage of unselfish love and responsibility—parenthood.

In creating my own family I finally felt a sense of completeness and safety that I had never experienced as a child. In



loving and protecting my child I finally understood my role in life. And in raising my daughter and trying to help her become a confident human being I recreated the lost happy childhood I always wanted—only this time on my terms and of my own making.

Maybe the most important lesson I have learned from parenting is that each of us has an infinite amount of love to give another and that we can overcome any selfishness in our hearts. A child teaches you that you always carry love in your heart. I learned, too, that I could be stronger than all my fears, that I could be happy again, that I was good in giving love and nurturing. I learned that I could help my daughter find her way and acquire skills, that I could also



feel more complete, that I could meet the very important responsibility of nurturing someone else.

What else have I learned from fathering? That I could take fuller pleasure in the world around me, that I could be loved, that I could do good. I learned that I was a good protector. I learned that a child's love and trust could help heal one's wounds and hurts. And I discovered that as I worked to make my child feel protected and loved safer and more secure, I became braver, too. Was there ever a parent who is not brave for a child? Oh, my blessed daughter! You will always be awesome to me.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there a child or young person who means the world to you?

Date

"May you forever be grateful for the good things you have."





Being A Newspaperman

was so blessed in having work that made me feel proud. I first became a newspaperman in college which filled great needs in my life. One was to be able to learn more about people and the world by asking questions and searching for answers, and I loved writing about what I learned. I wanted people to read what I wrote. And, imagine being paid a salary to ask questions. That is awesome, no?

The other need I had was to discover a new community of news people who shared my interests and who contributed to a greater good by providing news and information to the community. These people became a second family for me, a kind, loving family, different from the family that raised me amid anger and deception.

Later, as a newspaper reporter I travelled extensively through the nation and covered the civil rights movement. I am proud to say that my reports helped readers better understand the problems that minorities experienced and cast light on what could be done to improve their lives. **Some of the stories I told did change people's lives for the better.**

When I subsequently became editor-in-chief of my newspaper I managed many young journalists, helping them develop their skills, a very fulfilling responsibility. I was also to make major

improvements in the newspaper to make it more useful to readers and turned it into a prize-winning enterprise. This was a very creative, rewarding experience. How lucky I was to have that opportunity.







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

What is a meaningful thing that you have done or hope to do with your precious life?

TYPE HERE
Date

"May you give freely of yourself."





Having A Person to Love and to Be Loved

have been truly blessed in having a loving wife. When I first met Teodorina, her warm smile got me from the start. I felt right away that she was on my side, someone who proved to be a wonderful helpmate. She always supported me emotionally, particularly when I felt uncertain and fearful—and there were many such times.

I remember when I wrote my first book and wanted to publish it myself. She let me use our very limited savings to do so because she knew it was important to me and she believed in my crazy dream of being a publisher. When that book and others were published and began selling well, she and I would spend many hours each weekend stuffing the books into envelopes to mail to people who purchased them. Like me, she was tired from her regular Monday to Friday work, but because she loved me and believed in me she helped me and never complained. We were building something together.

She is a blessing, too, because she bore our child whom I so deeply wanted as part of our life together. Because she loved me so deeply she overcame her fears in bringing a child into the world. She is a terrific mother.

Teodorina has been through many illnesses, including multiple cancers, and throughout has shown great courage and a fighting spirit. Despite her illnesses she forges on and by so doing has taught me to be stronger and to



not give up on my own health issues. She has never lost her vitality and spark. I have so much to learn from her and am so thankful for her. **She is my beloved blessing.** She is my awesome tropical flower.









Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Is there someone who brings joy and light to your life, someone who is a blessing, someone who gives you awe? Who?

TYPE HERE

"May you have much joy in life."

Date _





The Simplest Blessings Are Sometimes the Best

Sometimes the greatest blessings in our lives revolve around the simplest acts of showing kindness to one another. When people are good to me, they help make me a happier, less troubled person. Their kindness underscores the innate good in people.

I think of the teacher who stayed patiently with me day after day after school was over to help me overcome my fears which were preventing me from learning how to read.

I could sense her kindness and she tried to ease my worries and helped build my confidence. Perhaps here

I could sense her kindness and she tried to ease my worries and helped build my confidence. Perhaps hers was the kindest act anyone ever did for me.

I think of the doctors at the hospital who try to answer my many questions and take the time to help me understand my illness, or the MRI attendant who asks if I am comfortable and places an extra pillow under my knees to ease the pain in my back.

I think of the taxi driver who steadies my wife as she tries to get out of his cab and shakily reaches for her stroller, how he helps her step up on the curb to enter our house. How kind!

These people's goodness, their gentleness tells me I am not so alone, that others have my back and want to help. Where does such kindness come from?

I think it would be awesome for the world if each of us, including me, made an extra effort to show kindness to others each day. What a wonderful, blessed way

to heal the world!





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

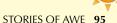
What simple acts of kindness have you experienced?
And, you, what have you done for someone else?
Where does kindness come from?

"May you inspire others to be

Date

their best selves"





How My Wife Saved My Life

y wife is a living blessing to me. Her love heals me and gives me hope and encouragement. She also saved my life.

Early one morning she found me in a comatose state, barely breathing after I deliberately overdosed on medication I had taken to escape a very deep depression from my physical illness. She immediately called 911 to take me to the hospital. There I lay in a coma for three days in the intensive care unit.

Each day she came and with all her fervor urged me to wake up. She wouldn't let go of me. She kept kissing my head, my eyes, my nose and lips, talking to me all the while trying to wake me, to keep me from giving up. I finally awoke. The power of Teodorina's love and strong spirit saved me and brought me back to life. It made me aware of the terrible deed I had done and the pain I had caused my family. In the hospital my wife gave me words of forgiveness and hope; she gave fully of herself and her love for me. Using her walker, she would come to visit me and give me courage.

I would not be alive today were it not for my wife's fierce will and determination. I bless and thank her with all my be-



ing. And I think of how lucky I am to be given a second chance at life. JUST AWE INSPRING! I must use my time well. I seek something positive now each new day in my life and I remember to express gratitude for what I have.





Write Your Own Story of Awe:

Has there been a person in your life whose love sustained and nurtured you, even saved you? How?

And, whom have you saved or aided?

TYPE HERE

"May you have someone to love."









Write Your Own Story of Awe:

TYPE HERE

Date		









Write Your Own Story of Awe:

	TYPE HERE







Write Your Own Story of Awe:

TYPE HERE
.
Date





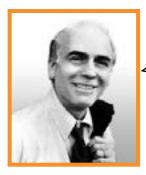
Write Your Own Story of Awe:

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Life is filled with blessings and awe if we look carefully.

About the Author

In his many books as well as in his work as a newspaper editor, Bill Zimmerman has pioneered innovative writing techniques to help people express all the important things within them.

His web sites are:

- http://www.billztreasurechest.com, which features excerpts from his books;
- http://www.makebeliefscomix.com, which enables visitors to create their own online comic strips, and
- http://www.somethingtowriteabout.com, a writing prompts blog for students.

Please visit them.

Among his popular books are:

Pocket Doodles for Kids; Pocket Doodles for Young Artists; Make Beliefs: A Gift for Your Imagination; Lunch Box Letters: Writing Notes of Love and Encouragement to Your Children and How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies.

Bill's work has been featured on The Today Show, on the acclaimed PBS Ancestors Series, and in The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and such magazines as Family Circle, Esquire, Business Week, Reader's Digest and Essence.



About the Artist

David Gothard graduated with a BFA in Drawing from Pratt Institute (1978). He has been a regular contributor to major national and international publications, including The New York

Times, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, Boston Globe, International Herald Tribune, and Time. He has also created a series of children's books for HarperCollins. David is also on faculty at Penn State University, The New York Academy of Art, and Pratt Institute. He works from his studio in the woods of Pennsylvania.

Artist's intent: It was decided that the initial sketches for this book conveyed a visceral quality that might not have been recaptured when creating the final illustrations. The images here are those preliminary drawings, tinted with sepia in Photoshop.

Share With Us

Your feedback on using this book is very welcome.

Please be encouraged to send your thoughts or suggestions on how we can improve this book, along with your permission to use your ideas.

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