

“PERKS”
GRAND VISITATION - MARCH 29, 2008
SILVER REEF CHAPTER #26, ST. GEORGE, UTAH

I think I'd like to talk today about the unexpected "Perks" in life.

When I look out into this room, I see faces not just of Eastern Star members but faces I easily identify as Job's Daughters or DeMolay – or Blue Lodge – or Shrine etc. etc... Many of us have worked together for years; wearing other hats. We call ourselves a Masonic Family. We work together, play together, eat together, travel together. When it comes to life cycle events we share in each others joy at weddings, at baby showers, at graduations, at Bas Mitzvah's. We also share in each others sorrows when someone is ill, or injured, and we grieve together when a member of our family passes.

On Tuesday our family lost Anne Lewis, our Grand Martha. Her funeral was this morning at 11:00 a.m.. My husband Kelly and I have known Anne, her husband Gene and their family for at least twenty years. Some of you have known them even longer. We all feel the loss and our hearts are hurting.

I debated not commenting about Anne at all today; but, I couldn't put my mind to rest so instead decided to share some of the thoughts I've had over the past month and a half. Many of the thoughts and emotions are flashbacks to last year with Mom and what I knew would be similar emotions and situations that Anne's daughters and family would experience. These are the same emotions that I'm sure our own Mindee Klinger, Grand Conductress is dealing with over the recent loss of her mother. The same emotions that Edie dealt with over the loss of her father. Because our Masonic Family lives are so intertwined I feel that at times our hearts do beat as one.

When Grand Chaplain, Pat Kay and I visited with Anne on Palm Sunday, from her chair in the living room you could see just a tiny bit of snow left on the ground but the warmth and sun really let you know that Spring and re-birth were in the air. We briefly talked about the flowers popping up, the Robins you could hear, the hummingbirds coming back and the butterflies that we would see.

I love hummingbirds and butterflies — but growing up with sand dunes and bull rushes, I'd never seen hummingbirds and only occasionally saw a butterfly. Instead, I saw hundreds of dragonflies.

This time last year, Mom was being given a nice relaxing, therapeutic, massage by Jennifer Miller. Jenny was one of my Jobies. Edie, you might remember her as Jennifer Driscoll. Jenny is still one of my girls and used to stop by to visit at least once a week, until she & her family moved to Southern California the end of April. Mom looked forward to Jenny's visits, the tea time - hot cider time - had been a tradition for almost fifteen years. As a massage therapist & part time recreation director at a nursing home, Jenny had flexible hours. Her calls and visits were always very good for Mom; but really special now that Mom was so sick. For many reasons Jenny was dreading the move to California - the timing was all wrong. We had long conversations about the

many moves I had made as a military family. We talked about how Mom, my siblings & I had felt leaving Canada. In between the visits where Jenny was able to help with pain management, or watch old movies, or arrange flowers, or sip a cuppa tea – we also spent a lot of time talking about the adventures, the challenges, the many new things to see and do. We decided that moving could have its “perks”. One of those “perks” was my first experience with butterflies.

We moved to California in October. Late October, Aunt Helen and I were driving to Pacific Grove to visit a relative I’d never met before. As we were winding our way down a tree-canopied street I saw a road sign I’d definitely never seen before – and could never have imagined. The sign read CAUTION BUTTERFLY ZONE. I was stunned, and mystified. Why do we have to be cautious about butterflies? Butterflies aren’t dangerous. Aunt Helen explained that Pacific Grove is one of the few spots in the world that Monarch butterflies migrate to. I was still confused as to why motorists had to have a CAUTION sign. Aunt Helen explained that from the first of October through the end of November there would be thousands of butterflies flying across this street on their way to the groves of trees where they would spend the winter. As motorists, we could injure them or kill them.

I loved the outdoors, I believed we needed to protect the environment, cruelty to animals appalled me. But.....it never dawned on me to put up a sign that said CAUTION - DRAGONFLY ZONE. I thought the residents here must really be tender-hearted.

After we returned to Riverside, I contacted the Chamber of Commerce and had them send me some Tourist Information about the migration. It was interesting to learn that there was a city ordinance which mandated a heavy fine as punishment for anyone caught hurting or interfering with the safety of the butterflies. On the second Saturday in October, every preschool and kindergarten child dressed up as a Monarch butterfly and the City had a parade to welcome the returning Monarchs who had flown over 1800 miles to return to Pacific Grove.

I was so intrigued by this phenomena that Aunt Helen and I drove back to Pacific Grove the next weekend so that I could see the groves of trees covered in butterflies. A woman who was there taking pictures told me that they estimated there were about ten thousand butterflies already in Pacific Grove, “but more would be coming” she proudly said. These delicate, gorgeous creatures were a very big deal and I now understood the sign CAUTION BUTTERFLY ZONE.

Jenny enjoyed hearing the story and put Pacific Grove on her list of places to go with her children. Mom enjoyed the story because it started her talking about Aunt Helen, her youngest sister, who had passed away from Cancer ten years earlier.

That short conversation with Anne reminded me that there are “perks” in life even at the most difficult times. That wonderful afternoon with Mom and Jenny was a “perk”. The memory of the two wonderful weekends with Aunt Helen was a “perk”. The visit with Anne had reminded me that creation is filled with exquisite beauty and variety. The fragile and the delicate. The strong and the powerful. I was once again reminded that we need to attend to not only the needs of our “Family” but also to the needs of the countless creatures that bring beauty, balance and love into our lives – all of earth’s creatures: humans, animals, flowers, trees, and

yes, the ten thousand butterflies hidden in those trees. Thank you Anne for the “Perks”.

I leave you with these two sayings to keep in mind, not just today but every day of the year:

There is an island of opportunity in the middle of every difficulty.

Give to the world the best you have and the best will come back to you.

A Friendship gives you a glimpse beyond this world, a little bit of heaven on earth.