

Ditzy Blonde Faucet
—It's a God Thing

Ditzy Blonde Faucet
—It's a God Thing

Linda Larson-Schlitz

Copyright © 2013 by Linda Larson-Schlitz.

ISBN: Softcover 978-1-4931-1140-4

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

This book was printed in the United States of America.

Rev. date: 10/04/2013

To order additional copies of this book, contact:

Xlibris LLC

1-888-795-4274

www.Xlibris.com

Orders@Xlibris.com

24213

CONTENTS

Dedication	7
Introduction.....	9
The Annoying Disease.....	13
Acceptance Of Ourselves And Others.....	14
What You Will Learn From My Experience	
If You Keep Reading Is	15
In The Beginning There Was Elvis	17
A Lesson On The Meaningless Time Consuming	
Compulsive Digression Of An Adhd Brain.....	18
Wait! Go Back!.....	19
Now What The Heck Was I Talking About???	19
Me And The Clothes Challenge	21
Who Stole My Car And Crashed Into The Garage??	
And Other Amusing Car Related Stories	24
Who Stole My Car?.....	24
Toilet Paper Doesn't Always Work	25
And How About Those Nice Police Officers.....	26
Hey Here's A New Party Game-“Find Grandma's Car Keys”	27
This Is The Stuff By Francesca Battistelli	30
Which Way Do I Go?.....	30
What Does That “Do Not Enter-One Way” Sign Mean???	31
Analogy.....	33
And Then There's The Garage Problem.....	34
And Then I Met Jesus!.....	34
Relationship Not Just A Religion.....	38
“If You Are Anxious”	39
“If You Don't Know What To Do”	39
“If You Have Sinned” Psalm 51:10	39
“If You Are Afraid” Isaiah 41:10	40
Relationships.....	44
Finding Passion Balance And How It Relates To Family	48

Finding Passion And Balance.....	48
Hey Let's Start A Non-Profit!	50
Whose Deal Is It? We Can't Let Them Die Can We?	52
Building A Foundation? What Is That?	55
The Reintegration Assistance Program (Rap).....	57
Our Enterprise Businesses	58
From A Daughter's Perspective	60
From My Daughter Heather.....	61
From My Step Daughter Mandi	61

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to all the “Faucet Servants” who opened themselves up to be a vessel for the Living Water. My thirst for acceptance, purpose, meaning and hope was quenched and together we are now able to open the floodgates that others will never thirst again. ¹³ Jesus said “Everyone who drinks of this(earthly) water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him ¹will never be thirsty again.² The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 13 ESV

INTRODUCTION

I started writing this book knowing I had to finish it and get it to my publishing submission representative in 10 days. After I decided to do that, we took the family on vacation at a waterpark for 3 days which I participated in fully and then I came back to go to a weight loss program meeting that my husband was going to be starting that took the rest of the evening. I had to work my full time job the next 3 days but not before getting my grandchildren at 4:30 in the morning and taking them to school.

I spent a few hours helping at Randlin Homes, the non-profit organization that I am the Co-Founder and President of, counseling a couple of the residents before I went home and made a huge batch of fresh vegetable soup and a batch of refrigerator pickles. I also made a couple of meals for my husband's new diet though I hesitated with the cabbage, afraid it might cause bloating which is a big problem with his Crohn's disease.

Unfortunately between my soup and the big plate of spaghetti and French bread he ate (instead of salmon and rice I had prepared for him) he developed a bowel obstruction and I had to rush him to the hospital Friday night only to find that he had a 7mm kidney stone sitting right next to the obstruction which will make over 560 kidney stones since 1978! He has passed over 60 kidney stones this year alone and there is no end in sight. It appears that I will be spending the last 18 hours before the deadline finishing the book right here at the Aspirus Hospital in Wausau in the recliner chair by his bedside where I have found myself dozens of times in these last 17 years.

Am I crazy?? Trying to write a book in 10 days? Some would say YES (and have said) that I am. So What is the definition of crazy anyway . . . let's see dictionary.com defines crazy as

1. Mentally deranged; demented; insane. 2. Senseless impractical; totally unsound; a crazy scheme; 3. Intensely enthusiastic; passionately excited; 4. Infatuated 5. Intensely anxious or eager; impatient

OK so maybe I do meet the definition of crazy but I have never been very good at passing up an opportunity that may provide a beneficial result to someone. When I talked to the publisher and found there was a special going on at Xlibris and if you got your manuscript in by the end of September it would be released on Black Friday, I had to jump at the chance!

I already had a contract with Xlibris for a book that I was going to publish about my friend that we had been writing for the last 15 years but she just wouldn't approve it and kept changing things and finally she changed her mind entirely after I had completed my part of it which was pretty frustrating. But the submission representative said I could go ahead and publish a different book since I was the only one on the contract. The only problem was that I didn't have a book that was ready to go to press.

I did publish a children's booklet type thing many years ago called "All Season Front Row Ticket to the Fights (whether you want to be there or not)" that was written by elementary school children that I had counseled over the years who were living in fighting families. It was a real tear jerker as every picture and every sentence in the book came out of the children themselves. It was sold for a number of years through Greystone Publications but I haven't done anything with it in years besides have it at our Randlin Homes Gallery of Hope Training Center Store and will be making it available on my website, www.lindalarsonschlitz.org

I also have a couple chapters done of a book called "Single Mothers in Recovery" about the stories of women who have tried to figure out how to go through substance abuse treatment and then get the follow up treatment they need with kids at home.

But the book you now have in your hands (or before your eyes) is the result of a life of experiences that have brought feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, sadness, shame, fear, anxiety, anger, rage, hopelessness, helplessness, happiness, gratitude, hopefulness and joy to name a few. How can you have the positives as well as the negatives?? It's all about perception and how you look at it. It's also about accepting the things you can't change, changing the things you can and gaining the wisdom to know the difference and that change from negative to positive didn't come over night and it didn't come without diligently working to change my thinking.

I have spent the last 37 years with the dream of becoming a famous author, singer/songwriter, artist, speaker/teacher/counselor. Ok there we have the problem right there. Can't I just want to be an author? Or a counselor? Or a speaker? No, I have to want to do 20 things at one time and consequently never finish any of them. What's up with that???

I did travel for a time with my best friend Linda Larson . . . no I am not talking about me being my own best friend, I really did/do have a friend and both of our names were Linda Larson. We were neighbors and went to the same one room school house with yet a 3rd Linda Larson. We grew up in a little farming community near York, Wisconsin. And we both had brothers named Ron and we both had 6 kids in our families and lived on farms and were cheerleaders. We even dated the same guys a couple of times. But she was a "good girl" and I took a left turn after high school and had a "testimony" a mile long giving me tons of opportunities to reach out to drug addicts, alcoholics, people who had gone through abortions and those who had been divorced.

What we had in common was music. We both loved to sing and were pretty gifted at harmonizing and writing so when I came back from my first year in Phoenix Arizona and hooked up with her to sing "In Love" a wedding song I had written at her friend's wedding, the call of God was laid out for us.

When I read Luke 12:48 where it says "To Whom much has been given, much will be expected" I took it literally I guess and because I believe God has blessed me with many things, like music and writing and art and creative problem solving and speaking and counseling and teaching to name a few, I believe I am accountable to use those gifts to lead people to Him. I just haven't quite figured out how to do that in a balanced way but I think this book will be the catalyst I have been waiting for because I can start to go out and speak and teach and use my art by selling my books and artwork and videos and CD's that will incorporate all of it. (hmmm . . . suddenly that doesn't sound balanced LOL!)

Unfortunately the not finishing thing has been my biggest problem and I fully intend to write this entire book in 2 weeks AND send it to my publisher so I can finally say IT IS FINISHED! With needing to submit this in 18 hours it will not go in polished. It will not go in with as much content as I started to put in here. It will be like me disjointed, unorganized, harried, and yet at times inspiring, funny, interesting and thought provoking. It will probably have grammatical and perhaps

spelling errors since Word doesn't always pick up if you used the wrong word in the sentence if it is a REAL word.

Like is typical of me and as my step daughter writes about in that chapter, there are times this book will make you laugh and other times it may make you cry. It undoubtedly will make you sad at times and at the same time may make you relieved to know you aren't alone in having "issues" or a sordid past, or a purpose in God that you aren't quite sure about yet.

You will probably be shocked that I am actually saying some of the things I am saying and I may be shocked as well like I have often been when family, friends, co-workers, supervisors or community members have gotten upset. I have been called into the office more than once and even got fired once for something that my boss or co-worker was upset about that I wrote or said. (He thought I was a great counselor but having a bull in his china shop was too risky ☹)

Just last week after I decided to write this book I left an out of the office message that said I would take a nap on my co-workers behalf as a joke. Now I have had that same message on there for my last 3 vacations but this time someone was upset and I was ordered to get it off immediately which was hard to do because I was on vacation. I forget other people have different ways of interpreting things than I do and I may say things to make people laugh or get my point across and they get all upset by either what I say or the way I say it and I do feel bad about that.

All too often I am clueless until it's too late. And the people who get the most upset are usually those who have low self-esteem and who have had difficulty telling people how they feel because someone in their past was critical and shaming so they bottle it up and go and complain to someone else instead of talking to the person themselves.

Sometimes it is people who like to or need to be in control and because I am a "get er done" take charge kind of person they get upset because they think I am too controlling and I rush off doing something without going through the proper channels or that it "isn't my deal" which is hard for me because is someone is in need and no one else is helping I have a hard time standing by and not doing anything.

So as you can see, there is good reason that some people think I am crazy to do these things over and over again expecting different results. That is insanity! So why do people like me do it anyway? Is it that I haven't learned anything over all these years? Unfortunately it is more than an education lesson. It's a disease.

THE ANNOYING DISEASE

So why don't I finish things I start? Some would say (and have said) I am just too lazy to finish things. Some say I am irresponsible. Others would say I am being too prideful and want a bunch of attention so I get all these things going so I can boast about stuff. Most people say it's because I have too much on my plate and I can't do them all. But those who know and love me understand that there is a logical, medical reason for my inability to focus on one thing and keep it all together and not be able to even get stuff off my plate.

It is a chemical imbalance in my brain and they call it "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder." ADHD is not about naughty kids who don't follow rules it about people, young and old whose brains do not have the proper chemical make-up for them to be able to think and behave properly. Despite their hyperactive nature, their brains are actually working too slowly or inaccurately to be able to process all the information being fed to them.

The brain is wired like an electrical box and the neurotransmitters are the chemicals that carry messages to the rest of the brain that tells the body what to do. Like a short in an electrical cord, the misfiring of the neurotransmitters cause things to go haywire. It is presently 7pm and my medication has pretty much wore off for the day but I decided I am just going to go ahead and take you along on the ride in my brain as I write this book so you can see and feel the channel changing ping pong ball in my mind and see if you can make any sense of it all.

To add to the chaos, I also was diagnosed with Hypo-Mania Type II Bi-Polar Disorder . . . whatever that is! In short, it is when someone doesn't have the severe mood swings that get them real depressed because their normal mood is elevated to begin with and then when they become "manic" they are even more "up" literally, and don't need much sleep and talk all the time and do stupid stuff like run naked in the street (closest I came to that was skinny dipping in the 70's with the other flower children after a bottle of Boonesfarm.) Some people drive fast, gamble, have lots of sex or hurt themselves.

Or there are some of us who may buy a house on "anticipated income" with a guy you've only known for a few months and follow that up by taking his kids and yours on a \$10,000 vacation to Florida that you pay for on a credit card. Ya that's real smart!!! Not real easy to get out of that mess! But this is what impulsive people do when they are not in their

“right mind” which I guess that would mean they are in their “wrong mind” which would be right!

There was NOTHING consistent with what I believed to be right and moral at that point in my life except for the fact that there were all these kids that needed some stability and for some crazy (yes that is what many people call those of us with these types of illnesses) reason I thought I could help provide that.

At least one of my step daughters has asked to write a chapter in this book about what it’s been like living with and knowing me so this should be interesting but they are the most resilient and awesome step kids you could ask for and God did what he promised and turned even those conflicted years into good for all of us . . . or at least most of us. We only have one left to get through the challenges of adolescent stupidity and he’s a bit more stubborn and impulsive like me. I once went out into the back yard to find red spray paint all over the beautiful wood fence. In shock I yelled out (what were you thinking?! And his response was a typical ADHD reality . . . “I wasn’t.” I knew exactly what he meant and we never talked about it again . . . but he had to stain the fence a blend in a color that blended with the red paint. Having an illness like ADHD, Bi-Polar, Schizophrenia or other diseases don’t get you off of paying for a speeding ticket or forgetting to pay your bills!

Perhaps this book is just one of those maniacal things that I will look back and say OMG! What was I thinking but fortunately God does work ALL things together for the good.

ACCEPTANCE OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS

So the point is that those of us with “mental illnesses” have challenges to overcome. We do a lot of things that we don’t like and in all honesty don’t really choose any more than an epileptic chooses to have a seizure or a diabetic chooses to have a reaction. Sure sometimes there are things you can do to prevent or minimize the symptoms of the disease but sometimes it just IS.

It affects us all because we all have “mental” illnesses at some point in our lives whether it is PMS or just hormone changes or a brain injury and if we allow God to help us we can all learn great things and accomplish much together.

It is my intention to help all ADD/ADHD people and others who may have any kind of illness as well as all those who struggle to love

them. I want them to see that despite the frustrations that we feel and that we cause, it is still “A God thing “and we have to look for the good in it all because Romans 8:28 promises that God works all things together for the good for those that love Him and are called according to His purposes” And my purpose is to share ME with the world and be OK with the response I get, or don't get.

I will do my best to make some semblance of order to this book but since I am on an extreme time crunch to get it done I expect it may seem a little disjointed . . . perhaps a lot disjointed . . . maybe completely disjointed to some of you, but I hopefully if that is the case you will use the opportunity to help you be more understanding and compassionate toward those who are different and have struggles that they need help with.

Expectations are pre-meditated resentments and if you got this book with an expectation to read something in particular or not read something that I wrote, you are setting yourself up for disappointment and other bad feelings. Bad feelings often cause bad behavior so let go of what you thought I was going to or SHOULD have said and let God speak to you. Listen to what He is wanting you to learn from this and take what you can to make your life and the lives of those around you better and leave the rest for someone else to get out of it what it is in here for. I am not writing this for anyone in particular. I am writing this because somebody, maybe only one person in the universe, needs to know they are not alone and God loves them and can and will use them just the way they are to do great things for Him.

What you will learn from my experience if you keep reading is

- How to go from struggling to get on the B honor roll one time in high school to graduating from undergraduate with a 3.7 GPA and graduate school with a 3.67 Grade Point Average
- How to go from being a single parent on food stamps and welfare with a 2 year old to a college graduate with a Master's Degree (and 90% of it was done without sitting in a traditional classroom)
- How to go from wanting to commit suicide because you can't quit drinking alcohol and using drugs to being clean and sober and running a rehabilitation training program for homeless alcoholics and addicts

- How to go from feeling like you are worthless because you have been divorced twice and got fired from your job and keep screwing up things you try to do to sharing The Red Cross Community Hero of the year Award with my husband and in the same year being chosen to receive The Athena Award
- How to accept the things you cannot change, change the things you can and how to gain the wisdom to know the difference
- How to discover how much God loves you and that He has a totally awesome plan for your life that he will help you discover and fulfill
- How to become what you want to become and do what God has created you to do
- How to look at yourself, others and life itself from a different vantage point so you can change the unchangeable world with a ton of new ideas coming from a new you
- How to be able to determine when someone's medication is working and when it is not based on the flighty thinking, writing and behavior that is going on. Unfortunately medication isn't a cure all but it has definitely made a positive difference.

So read on and enjoy. If you don't, that's on you because what you get out of every conversation, every book, every song, every experience, every meeting and every experience is up to how you choose to look at it and I would encourage you to look for the good in all of life because you will be much happier and so will those around you.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS ELVIS

The first indication that I had “issues” occurred back in 1956 . . . maybe even before that (I was born on June 12th, 1955) but by the time I was at the “terrible two” age, I validated that definition. After having 3 active sons my parents were excited to have a daughter expecting that I would be a sweet little thing sitting quietly in my little pink dress and curly cues acting prim and proper at all the social events making them proud. But for those who know me it will be no surprise to learn that by the time I could barely walk I was not sitting quietly but I was jumping from couch to couch and chair to chair doing somersaults and knocking things over like an annoying puppy chewing on your shoes.

But it was my church behavior that brought them the most attention and embarrassment. I was somewhere between 2 and 3 years old at the time and Elvis Presley had released a great song in 1956 and I apparently listened to the radio quite a bit in those days. I had it down pretty good they say so when the congregation bowed their heads to pray, the church was quiet and waiting for my Shirley Temple/Elvis Style debut so I stood up on the pew and belted out “Ain’t nothing but a hound dog . . . crying all the time”

My parents tried to get me to sit down but I resisted telling them I was going to sing and dance, which of course I proceeded to do since I am not very good at listening to authority as my previous bosses would say (note . . . *previous* bosses . . . more on that later) The church was hysterical and it wasn’t the last time I brought some humor and tears of laughter to the serious adult world. (You will learn later about the salsa on my underwear the lost key found in my pants by a stranger, almost sitting

on a railroad spike taped to my chair in Science class because I wasn't paying attention and finding the right car in those big parking lots)

A year or two later we were up at Altoona, near Eau Claire Wisconsin and we were swimming with my cousins in the lake there. I was about 3 or 4 and I was floating on a rubber raft out by the other kids and of course I am sure I was told numerous times to lay still on it or I would tip over but I couldn't lay still, I still can't. Or maybe I just jumped off, I don't know but all I do know is that in a flash I was sinking to the bottom of the lake and gulping up tons of water in the process.

My family had become accustomed to keeping a pretty close eye on me as I was always running off here and there, darting into the road in front of traffic and other dangerous things without paying attention. It wasn't long before I was retrieved but not before causing quite a scare. Everyone rushed to see if I was OK and as the crowd gathered round I stood up, brushed off the sand and proudly announced that I had drowned and I didn't even cry. If we would have had the money my parents probably would have carted me out to the Art Linkletter Show "Kids Say the Darndest Thing" by then because that was me . . . trying to make the best of a bad situation and doing it in a humorous way.

A LESSON ON THE MEANINGLESS TIME CONSUMING COMPLUSIVE DIGRESSION OF AN ADHD BRAIN

I was going to add this where it popped into my head but decided to plug it in here instead as it really has nothing to do with the story except that it is MY brain we are talking about here and I want you to understand how it works . . . or doesn't!

So I was writing the paragraph about my "previous" bosses I was thinking my readers might better relate to my meaning if I called them X bosses because that brings about a more common understanding because of X husbands and X wives and the notion that if they are X's it isn't a good thing for somebody . . . but not always the case because sometimes X's get along better than before they became X's right? Then suddenly, as my mind goes, the thought popped into my head about being a waitress for 20 years and when we crossed something off the list some people would just do the X thing . . . as in "it is finished . . . gone . . . none left" but for some reason we would call out 96 instead. I wondered where that came from? Who made that up?? What does it mean . . . did some restaurant only have 96 steaks or something so when that was gone that

was the key word??? I looked it up but couldn't find it . . . am I wrong? Wasn't that what we called out? But I know we used it in more than one restaurant.

Help me out here fellow food service people . . . where did that come from??? Now that whole digression thinking about stupid stuff paragraph took me an extra 10 minutes or more going off on some meaningless tangent . . . or is it meaningless?? I will bet there are those of you out there wondering the same thing right?? What does 96 mean in the restaurant or any other world? So there you have it . . . it was worth it. I helped someone. It was a God thing!

Wait! Go Back!

OK so I thought that paragraph was done until I read it over and the 96 thing just didn't seem right and I didn't want to look stupid if there really wasn't a 96 slang word we used so then it popped into my head and I am sure all of you food service people were going nuts in that last paragraph going NO it's 86 it's 86! So yes . . . I remember now it was 86, not 96 so I looked THAT up and sure enough, restaurant slang word 86 was there. And here is the answer to where that got started . . . and cool, I had a darn good guess on the steak thing . . . (no tangent going on here this is all relevant . . . and you wonder why I never finish the task at hand?)

*The Delmonico's origin. This seems to be the most widely-accepted explanation for the term 86, and may even have some proof to it. Ribeye steak (sometimes other items are used, depending on which story you read) was item number 86 at Delmonico's. On one, or more, occasions, they ran out of item "86", which somehow became shorthand for running out of anything. (There are a lot of other possible explanations but I am not listing them all here . . . feel free to waste your own time looking them up :)

Now what the heck was I talking about???

Oh shoot, now I have to digress again because I said what the heck . . . some of you may feel that is like swearing and may get really offended by that just like saying oh geez or even oh shoot . . . but the definition of heck in the dictionary is "a mild exclamation of surprise, irritation etc.," so it's an appropriate word and one, I must say, I use quite often when wandering from room to room wondering "what the

heck am I doing here” or “why the heck doesn’t this street look familiar (wrong way on a one way you idiot!) or “where the heck are my keys, my cellphone, my computer, my glasses etc)

OMG (oh my gosh) or geez are not terms to use the Lord’s name in vain either. Geez comes from Leave it To Beaver . . . well probably didn’t originate there but maybe it did! It doesn’t say in the dictionary. But Beaver always use to say “Geez Wally” remember that?? Anyway, that has a very similar meaning in the dictionary to the word heck—Geez= “Used to express mild surprise, delight, dissatisfaction, or annoyance.”

So now you have a glimpse of what you are going to get if you decide you want to join me on my roller coaster brain and life that will give you the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat . . . now where did that come from . . . I can hear the guy on TV . . . Sunday night I think what was he talking about . . . sports of some kind . . . was it the Olympics?? Shoot, now I have to look it up pause, pause, pause a couple minutes later . . . it comes from ABC’s Wide World of Sports—and the phrase itself was written by Stanley Ralph Ross. This is the full introduction:

“Spanning the globe to bring you the constant variety of sport . . . the thrill of victory . . . and the agony of defeat . . . the human drama of athletic competition . . . This is ABC’s Wide World of Sports!”

Well maybe someday I’ll get on ABC. At minimum I’ll be on You Tube . . . well I am already on You Tube, I have my own Channel but I will put better stuff on You Tube, when I get time that is. Rather when I make time. That’s my problem . . . I have 7 habits of highly ineffective people that keeps me stuck. I will tell you about that later but I have to take a break. I have been writing now for 2 hours but I only have 12 days to finish this book. Xlibris has this deal and if I can get it to them by the end of the month it will be in print by Thanksgiving (Black Friday) so I am going to give it a shot. I wrote my Master’s thesis in 2 ½ days so this should be doable right?? I may only get up to age 10 of my life story but whatever happens I will believe that “It’s a God Thing!”

Now that I think about it, I really don’t remember much between age 3 and 10 . . . well a few things . . . maybe more will come back to me, What did that editor guy say?? It can’t be more than 750 pages??? I laughed . . . I would NEVER read a 750 page book . . . I’m lucky if I can read 7.5 pages and stay on task but who knows . . . I’m on the roll here so we’ll see. As long as it doesn’t have to be organized in some college required logical numerical format I can do this.

At least my daughters will read it because they love to laugh at me and I'm even laughing looking at how crazy my brain is. Gotta love it . . . that is unless you have OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) like my husband does where you organize the silverware in the sink BEFORE you wash them and the cup handles have to all be the same way in the cupboard I'm lucky if the cup is even IN the cupboard . . . it might be in a drawer or in my car or outside on the swing. If he's lucky it might have made it to the dishwasher but undoubtedly it will be put the wrong direction on the wrong rack with too much stuff around it. But so it goes.

ME AND THE CLOTHES CHALLENGE

Whether it was in school, at work or in the community me and clothes were another area of gaining some valuable lessons and precious memories. My chronic mind activity and creative problem solving skills were very helpful most of the time but then there were times when my solutions and my rushing around trying to get things done didn't help.

Like the day I decided to wear my new red fishnet stockings to school but couldn't find the garter belt that would hold them up so I came up with another solution.

"Hey . . . what about rubber bands? That should work!" I said to myself!

So that was the plan. I put them on, pulled the rubber bands up on my thigh (mini-skirts were in back then) and it seemed to work OK. And then my brother Jeff hollered "the bus is here!" So I grabbed my books and took off out the door to run down our long driveway. About half way down the driveway it began.

You see there was elastic on the top of the stockings and it wrapped around the rubber band nicely but as I headed for the bus the rubber band started to roll down my leg and by the time I got to the bus the stockings had rolled down practically to my ankles looking more like a red bracelet attached to a fish net that had just scooped up a size 7 ½ saddle shoe, not the cool black and white ones that were in style either, but grey and black ones that were on sale and definitely NOT in style.

You would think I would have learned something from that episode but with the memory issues and my rationale that a little tweaking will change the outcome, I tried it again, this time with a pair of regular nylons before the days of panty hose. Now they too had elastic on the top and it felt like it was going to be plenty tight to hold them up.

Perhaps if my legs would have looked like a phone pole, all nice and even it would have worked but with a larger thigh that tapers down to your ankles it was a matter of gravity so as I am running down the driveway this pair of hose didn't roll, they just came down and nicely draped over my knee high snow boots like a little blanket. I stepped onto the bus not knowing if I should grab them and pull them up, pretend it never happened or just wait until I sat down, but when Bernie the bus driver opened the door and I saw him laughing and shaking his head I knew the cat was out of the bag and I may as well laugh along with him. I didn't have any stockings to school that day which was embarrassing too!

Another day, which was cheerleading try outs, I was especially sidetracked mentally. My day started with Steve Narva, the guy I had a crush on at the time, coming to my locker to greet me. My heart skipped as I tried to look especially attractive with my new (well new to me from the second hand store we would go to which was out in the woods somewhere near Whitehall) white blouse that had frills on the collar and sleeves. I waited for him to comment on it which of course he did . . . "hey, your buttons are buttoned wrong. Now that really did it. I felt so much better that he had noticed me. That was the extent of our conversation that morning and he walked away leaving me with his assessment. AUGH!! How embarrassing.

Then we get down to the cheerleading try outs and I was sitting on the bleachers with Ellen Everson who was one of the cool girls who I, for some reason, seemed to feel stupid around. I don't think she was trying to be mean but she was a city girl and I was a farmer and city kids always seem to be more of the "in crowd." She was also a bit on the wild side and wasn't intimidated by anyone and never hesitated to say what was on her mind.

So here we are waiting for try outs and she is looking at me and then starts to laugh and point at my feet and announces "you have your sock on inside out." Now if I would have had them both on inside out it wouldn't have been so bad but it was only one and here I was trying to impress everyone and I can imagine the cheerleading coach wondering if I would be a good risk or if I would be going to a game with my socks on inside out embarrassing the whole team. My cousin Mary Harnisch had done a good job teaching me the cheers so I got to be a cheerleader that day but I never forgot the sock incident.

I also have never forgotten the time I was speaking in front of about 250 women and I came down off the stage only to have my friend alert

me that the tag was protruding out of the front collar of my sweater and the pocket with the pretty pearl was on my back. OMG! How embarrassing. I wonder how many people noticed??

Fortunately, many of these events are only a couple people who see it like my Co-Worker Norm who just a few weeks before I started this book asked me in a non-judgmental way if it was possible that my blouse was on inside out. Sure enough it was. And over the years other co-workers attempted to save me the embarrassment by telling me I had different colored shoes, a rip all the way down the seam of my skirt and that my zipper was open.

Now the one time I am glad nobody told me my zipper was open was the day we went out for Mexican food with a bunch of my girlfriends. I had on my new wool skirt (as always, new to me from a thrift store.) Now being a cheapskate, I really hated paying for dry cleaning so it was my plan to be very careful not to mess it up the first day.

So we are ravishing on the chips and salsa when my friend quietly tells me that I just dropped a huge gob of salsa and it fell onto my lap. Fear engulfed me as I thought of having to pay money to dry clean my new skirt so I quickly looked down to see how bad it was and my immediate response was PRAISE GOD!!! My zipper was wide open and the salsa had fallen on my underwear completely missing my wool skirt. It is that looking for the good that makes having these kinds of illnesses tolerable, actually life itself is much more tolerable when you look for the good instead of the negative.

As you can imagine, by the time I was a Sophomore my classmates already knew who was the most entertaining “blonde” in the class. Now they liked me because back in those days we would have to choose the cheerleaders by performing in front of the whole school and I was chosen 6 years in a row. I was also chosen for Homecoming Queen and Winter Carnival Court but I was also popular in getting the brunt of practical jokes.

After 40 years, we were still talking about it at our class reunion in Whitehall, Wisconsin. It was the last hour of the day when I flew into biology class and plopped down on a thumb tack. The whole class is laughing and I don't have a clue and nobody told me what it was all about. I didn't think much more about it until the next day when I sat down on PAIN and realized they had put a bunch more tacks on my chair. As they laughed like they did yesterday I figured out what had happened the day before.

You would think that this surely would make me more cautious when I came to biology class but for the 3rd day in a row I was oblivious to what was going on around me, (or under me) when the culprit, they tell me now was Gary Peterson (who is most remembered by some of us for dislocating his elbow in Phy. Ed. class) taped a railroad spike on my seat to see if I was going to be clueless once again and I didn't disappoint him. Fortunately Mr. Hinton, who liked to have fun in class too only let the joke get to a certain point before he stopped me to save my butt, literally!

WHO STOLE MY CAR AND CRASHED INTO THE GARAGE?? AND OTHER AMUSING CAR RELATED STORIES

If you know anything about me, or probably a lot of other ADHD people, you know that their cars have always looked like someone lives in them. For over a year I had a roll of toilet paper in my back window not because I went to the bathroom in my car or used it on the side of the road or anything or it wouldn't have lasted a year right?. I don't know why it was there or who put it there but when someone suggested I move it I objected because it came in real handy when I came out of a store and had no idea where I parked my car or even what car I drove to the store, but I could always rest assured that no one, anywhere, in any kind of car had a roll of toilet paper in the back window.

So I left it there against the objections of those close to me who were embarrassed by having a roll of toilet paper in the back window of a car they were riding in. I had learned some things over the years about the realities of my ADHD so I was "accommodating" myself with the roll of toilet paper just to play it safe. Just having a bunch of stuff in my car or back window just wasn't enough because the amount and type of stuff changes from day to day so that wasn't a good enough marker. I learned that the hard way when I lived in Phoenix, Az.

Who Stole My Car?

I had finished an ordeal of a filling at the dentist and was anxious to get home so I headed out into the 105 degree heat and rushed to my car with thoughts of all I had to do when I got home and then I saw it my heart began to race when I saw that my "stuff" was gone. All my STUFF wasn't in the car! It was like someone had come and cleaned it

all out when I was at the dentist. Who could have done that? Why would they have wanted to?? It's not like I had diamond rings or anything in there but nevertheless it was gone. So I headed back in to call the police and they told me to go out and wait by the car.

By the time I got outside not only my STUFF was gone but the whole car was gone! This takes the cake! They clean out the car before they steal it??? Then, out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a car that looked just like my stolen car. No it looked even more like my car than the stolen car looked because it had stuff all over. Hmmm . . . this looked like my stuff? Did the robber move my stuff to this car or was this . . . no it couldn't be . . . oh yeah that's right I parked over on that side this time . . . I called the police back and told them they didn't need to come, it was a false alarm. It certainly got a lot of people laughing that day . . . some who were having a really bad day so I cheered them up so clearly, it was a God thing.

Toilet Paper Doesn't Always Work

Now I didn't actually get in the wrong car in Phoenix when I called the police to report my stuff stolen. I just looked through the window and saw it wasn't a trashed mess. When I moved back to Wausau I had learned from that experience so I looked to find ways to be able to identify my car easily and having a roll of toilet paper in the back window really helped but it didn't always work.

On at least 4 occasions I recall when I actually got into or at least made great attempts at the owners disapproval to get the key to unlock the door of a car other than my own. Now this has nothing to do with whether you have markers in your car to draw them to your attention. This has to do with not remembering what car you drove to the parking lot and where you parked and then if you do find a car that resembles yours, you still have to identify it accurately. You also have to not be zoned out into some other world and just walking mindlessly through the parking lot texting or talking on the phone or thinking about things that distract you.

Well sometimes I drive other peoples cars, like my husbands HHR. It is burnt orange and you wouldn't think there would be that many of them in a town the size of Wausau but there are quite a few. And his car doesn't have STUFF or toilet paper to identify which car is actually his so that is a lot more understandable why I would have gotten confused

there. Fortunately it was late and both cars were parked quite far from the door of Shopko so no one actually saw me fumbling around trying to get one orange car open and then going to a different one in the lot when I was unsuccessful with the first one.

I was at an AA meeting one day with a bunch of friends and I was talking to one of them on my way out as I was heading to my car. Still talking I opened the unlocked door and got in and tried to put the key in the ignition before realizing I was in his car, a blue Toyota and I have a black Hundai. He is laughing hysterically and I laugh along with him as usual and head to my own car which was parking spaces behind him.

The people at AA are such a good group of people Unlike a lot of churches I have been to there is rarely any kind of negative shaming going on. They seem to all understand that most of us are pretty screwed up and it takes us along time to make the connection to God and to get a handle on step 11 which is "Prayng only for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.". Consequently when someone makes a mistake there isn't the fear of going to one of them and asking for help because you know that the great majority have been there, done that and won't make you feel bad for making a stupid mistake.

But I have yet to find anyone who has actually done what I did one very cold winter morning at the Alano Club in Wausau, WI. It was below zero and needless to say I had the heat cranked up. It was toasty warm in the car by the time I got to the AA meeting but I was late as usual. I pulled the car into the last spot on the street and went to grab my coffee and my checkbook and jumped out of the car, locked the door and slammed it shut. Then it dawned on me, the car is still running and I just locked the door!. I had a spare set but they were in the car so one of the nice guys from AA took me home to get my husband's set. I was only 20 minutes late this time to work.

We got more keys made but right now at the moment I only can find 2 of the 3 sets but I am sure they will turn up. I only had one yesterday but today found one under my piles of clothes in the closet.

And How About Those Nice Police Officers

When I think about the dozen or more police officers and other people I have met who have unlocked my car with their little gadgets and saved me tons of money that I have otherwise paid to those door lock

opening guys! One time I called a lock smith only to find the key wasn't in my car but in my purse all along! UGH!

But the last couple months has set a new record to the number of times I have locked my keys in the car (or lost the key from the time I got out of the car until I tried to get back in it which at times is only a matter of minutes) Two weeks ago it was up in Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin, a Native American community where I go twice a month to help people find jobs. This was actually the 2nd time I have locked my keys in the car there but the other time I had my spare hidden outside so I was able to get in. This time, my spare was in the car along with my mega ring set that I always put on my wrist as a bracelet, a strategy my doctor suggested, that works really great when you actually remember to do it. I have no idea what happens to my brain between OK take the key out, put it on your wrist . . . take the key out put it on your wrist you know a habit . . . do it every time and this will never happen but it does and it is so frustrating to look in the window (yes still with stuff all over) and see the keys just sitting there on the seat? For what reason did I do that? No explanation

But fortunately, I have some great people that I have been working with that find me amusing and fun to be around so I asked them for help. With all kinds of gadgets they pried and dug and chipped paint and bent the door to no avail. I had gone to the police department and they would have been happy to help but they couldn't find their gadget to open car doors. They had no idea where it was.

So after 15 minutes without any success one of the guys saw a buddy down the street and asked for his help. WOW what are the chances that the first person he asks happens to have one of those gadgets right there in his pick up! He came over and was able to quickly get in the car to get my keys. I told him that the police were going to do it but they couldn't find their gadget and it was great he happened to have one. He quickly responded with "Hey I didn't steal it . . . they just left it there!" I have no idea if he was serious or just making a joke but we all got a good laugh and I was on my way with a lot more dents and paint missing on my door rims. I had my keys and a good memory of the guys who helped me that day.

Hey Here's a New Party Game- "Find Grandma's Car Keys"

The most recent locked door hysteria was at my Grandson Hayden's 16th birthday party at his "Papa Joe's" house. There must have been 40 people milling around as we were all getting ready to leave for the day. I

was frantically looking for the key that I absolutely knew for sure I had put in my right front pocket but it was not there. Word spread quick and the masses were helping in the search for my keys that were somewhere in the great unknown, a place that is all too familiar to those of us with ADHD which I expect that Francesca Batticelli, an awesome singer/songwriter has either experienced herself or she was writing about in her song “This is the Stuff” (that drives me crazy).

Someone looked in the window and saw a big ring of keys on my seat and suggested that I have Joe just break into my car to get them. Joe is the owner of “Dr.Lube’s” a traveling oil change service that goes right to your house or office to do oil changes and transmission flushes etc. Joe said he’d help but because I was almost positive that the key wasn’t in there I didn’t want to be embarrassed to have him open it for nothing.

He checked it out anyway and I drew his attention to the many dents and gouges out of my door and window casings from the other times helpful bystanders have tried to assist in retrieving my keys out of my car, twice in the last month to be exact, so I told him he didn’t need to worry about being real careful! Everyone noticed all the stuff in my car that I had referred to earlier in my book but now I have a wooden Santa Claus in my back window because the roll of toilet paper I used to have as a marker was needed for it’s intended use!

So Papa Joe is gearing up to break in when the multitude crowd gathered round to watch the would be break in. Just then “Papa Jim pointed and asked if that wasn’t a key stuck down into my pants? I looked down, couldn’t see it but sure enough I felt a key, not in my pocket but stuck down my pants held by my belt. Everyone busted out laughing as I thanked him.

Someone who missed the excitement walked up just then and asked if we had found the key and I told him “Yes!, Papa Jim found it down my pants!”

Hysteria broke out at which time my step daughter Mandi said “That’s it!! You have to write a book!!!

Now a lot of people would leave that experience feeling stupid, embarrassed, ashamed and angry because people were laughing at them. I see it as “A God Thing” because I now have another story to add to my repertoire of amusing and humorous stories to write about, speak about, sing about and make money with. Not that it’s all about money because it’s not but it’s about doing what God created me to do which is

to be who He created me to be and inspire others to serve Him in spite of myself, my weaknesses and my perceived shortcomings.

God doesn't make junk. He didn't screw up when He made me. And He didn't make me do all kinds of illegal drugs and drink lots of alcohol that further impaired my thinking ability. And when we do things like that to ourselves it causes genetic changes in our offspring that causes them to have the same predisposition to the same problems we have. That's not God's fault.

God put our world in motion and wants us to serve Him without coercion which means that we are free to do ourselves harm and to do harm to others but He promises to "Work all things together for the good for those that love Him and are called according to His purposes" which I believe we all are.

So I am grateful that I lost my key AGAIN! This time at Hayden's birthday party because so many positive things can come of this if I choose to look at it that way

- 1) I was encouraged to write a book about my ADHD
- 2) I realized I can make people laugh
- 3) I have another story to use in my humorous speaking
- 4) I have another story to write about
- 5) I was able to give a little free PR to Dr. Lube's business . . . he goes to your business or home and does oil changes right there! (I'd include a phone number here but hopefully people will be reading this for centuries to come and Dr. Lube will be dead . . . at least the original owner, Joe Kressel will eventually die and therefore won't be able to answer the phone I expect)
- 6) The more people I write about who know people, the more people who might buy this book to show their friends that they know somebody who is written about in the book . . . OK so granted this part is about money ☺
- 7) Other people, lots and lots of you who are reading this either ARE someone like me or KNOW someone like me and you now may be less upset about the whole losing keys, dents in cars, embarrassing moments, time lost and money spent on key related retrieval thing because you have a better understanding that it's an illness
- 8) It's all in your perspective. Change the way you think and it will change the way you feel and that will change the things you do.

I mentioned Francesca Battistelli before and she is a great example of someone who has taken the frustrations of life and found the good in it AND she did it with a ukelele, an instrument I learned to play from my Godfather!

THIS IS THE STUFF by Francesca Battistelli

*I lost my keys in the great unknown
And call me please 'Cuz I can't find my phone*

CHORUS

*45 in a 35
Sirens and fines while I'm running behind*

CHORUS

*This is the stuff that drives me crazy
This is the stuff that's getting to me lately
In the middle of my little mess
I forget how big I'm blessed
This is the stuff that gets under my skin
But I gotta trust You know exactly what You're doing
It might not be what I would choose
But this is the stuff You use*

*So break me of impatience
Conquer my frustrations
I've got a new appreciation
It's not the end of the world!*

CHORUS

So what is Francesca saying? In essence she is talking about the first verses I ever memorized in James 1:2-4 ² Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, ³ for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full

bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete. (The Living Bible) Thank you Francesca

Which Way Do I Go?

I am sure we have all been lost at one time or another in our lives and back before cell phones and GPS's to give us automated directional instructions we had to stop and find a phone booth or use someone's landline. And what if the person didn't answer? Lots of people didn't even have answering machines . . . and so what if they did? How could they reach you?

Well I had been at a Counselor Convention in Stevens Point Wisconsin and was in the midst of a lot of relationship problems. I was very emotional and couldn't wait to get home to talk to my best friend and see if I could make any sense of what to do about it.

I was lost in thought, crying and praying and it seemed like it was taking way too long to get home. I consciously decided to look at the next sign and when I saw it my heart stopped. "Westfield-1 mile."

Westfield? Was that the one exit just south of Plover, no that was Plainfield! Oh no! Westfield is right before you turn to go to Madison. I pulled into the gas station there and called home. I was 81 miles from home! I'd already been on the road almost an hour and now I had another hour and ½ to get home. It was not a good night, but nobody got hurt and it gave me time to work things out with God. It was his way of letting me know that I needed to stop and ask Him which way to go before I take off doing my own thing and thinking I know best. His way is the RIGHT way, not my will but Thine be done Lord!

What Does That "Do Not Enter-One Way" Sign Mean???

I had lived in Wausau Wisconsin for over 25 years when my step son Jay and I were enroute back to our home after stopping at one of our transitional homes for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts that we were helping. It had been a long day and I had a lot on my mind, like usual! We pulled up to the stop sign and I turned left and almost immediately Jay started yelling at me "Linda, there's a cop coming right at you! You are going the wrong way!" GREAT!!! Just what I need . . . I crank it to the right and turn on to the next block going the RIGHT way

with the police officer right on my tail. No need to even turn the lights I'm thinking so I pulled right over and got my license out and waited.

After I gave the nice officer my license he asked if I was new to the area and if I knew this was a one way street. I answered "Officer I have lived in Wausau for over 25 years and I am fully aware this has been a one way street for all those years, however, I apologized, I was still working full time besides my work with Randlin Homes, this program that helps these fall through the cracks alcoholics and addicts stay on track. He appreciated our work which made his job easier so he agreed to let me go on my way but made me promise I would never go up a one way street the wrong way again and then he sent me on my way.

I went about 5 years after that before I had to break that promise I had made. It was a hot summer night and there was a tornado warning for our area. We were over at the Randlin Homes 20 bed education and training center dormitory huddling in the basement until the storm passed. I had been up since 5am and had not had supper when they announced that the danger had passed so I decided to stop at burger king on my way home.

Burger King was right across the street from the Marathon County Jail building and the Sheriff's Department. Since many of the people we work with at Randlin Homes are frequent flyers with the Wausau Police and Marathon County Sheriff's Department we cross paths quite often. As I was coming out of the drive through and turning right, a Wausau Police Officer was driving out from the jail Ramp Parking lot and turning left right behind me. I got to the stop sign on 5th Street and I turned right to go to Scott Street but I suddenly became confused. Nothing looked familiar! Where was I? Then I saw a car heading at me, then the police officer siren and lights behind me and I pulled into the next drive way where I immediately started laughing. I had done it again! What could I say when he asked me . . . "Are you new to the area?" or "Did you know this was a one way street?"

I had my license ready when me got to the car and started to ask "Are you new to . . ." Well hello officer, it's me Linda Larson Schlitz, I haven't seen you in a few days how are you? "Oh yes," he said, "I just saw you at Randlin Homes the other day right?"

"Yes that's right, thank you officer," I said as the Counselor in me kicked in. "You did such a great job with that young man! He's got quite an anger problem and you handled that well."

He smiled then said “So Linda, I have to admit, I just couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw you turn onto 5th Street!” I said to myself, “Oh my gosh, look at that, someone is turning onto that one way street with a cop right behind them. I wondered what in the world?!”

“Well officer,” I laughed, “I can assure you it was not to test your skills or your patience but I am on my 15th hour without a break today and I haven’t eaten yet and I just turned one street too soon I guess.

“I understand” he says. “Well let me check out your license and if it comes back OK I will let you go home to get some rest.”

As I waited for him to check things out I was sure he was going to come back with hand cuffs after he read the previous report that probably read something like “Hey, if you ever stop Linda Larson Schlitz and she is going up the wrong way on a one way street arrest her because she promised she would never do that again!”

My panic attack was interrupted by the officer handing me back my drivers license and telling me to go home and get some rest and try to pay attention to where I am going next time.

WHEW!! He didn’t even make me promise something but that doesn’t mean I wasn’t taking it seriously. I did commit to myself though that I would try to get some things off my plate so this was not going to happen again anytime soon!

It was at least 3 weeks later, just a block West of where I had been stopped the 1st time for going up the wrong way and 1 block North where I had been stopped the 2nd time. We were getting ready for a big flea market fundraiser in the Marathon Savings Bank Parking Lot and I was going to swing in quick and check out where we could put up some signs so I drove past the bank on Scott Street and took a right on 5th Street AGAIN!!! Helloooo??? 5TH STREET IS A ONE WAY STREET GOING SOUTH! Fortunately there were no officers around and the oncoming traffic was at least a block away so I was able to pull into the Elks Club Parking spot and get headed in the right direction.

All the other times I have gone up the wrong way were pretty non incidental but nevertheless potentially hazardous. The moral of these wrong way stories is this . . .

Analogy

Sometimes we think we are heading in the right direction but then something distracts us and we lose our focus. If we are not stopped

we could go the wrong way for a long time causing us to lose great opportunities, time, money and much more. Sometimes even when encouraged to go in a different direction by someone who may be more familiar with the road we are on or who has a better map, we rebel thinking we know best. We pay the price, and for me, the price I have paid by not listening to God's direction is way too high to continue to go in that direction. From this day on I will follow the great Navigator to get my ship in safe to the harbor and my heart to the hospital where the Great Physician works.

AND THEN THERE'S THE GARAGE PROBLEM

The first time I hit the garage door backing out of the garage was when I was still living with my friend Kathy. It was her garage and it was a little tricky getting out from my side of the garage because I had to angle around to get around the house. That wasn't really the problem though on this day. It was just a rush to get out the door and I turned to quick and bumped the garage door on the right side as I was backing out. There wasn't huge damage but certainly scrapes on the door jam and on my bumper.

I don't know how long it was before the next issue but this day I was clearly even more distracted and turned the wheels much sooner, going faster than usual because when I hit the garage it knocked it moved the entire garage. My roommate was not very happy and said that I needed to pay more attention. Now she knew I had ADHD and actually was in a profession where she helped kids who had ADHD get the help they need in school but seems that tolerance for an adult with this problem, especially one that you live with is much more challenging.

In her frustration she challenged me by saying that she would bet that if I was to get paid \$1,000,000 I would never hit the garage again and I told her she could throw me in jail and pay me a million dollars and I probably would hit the garage again because it's not a choice I make to not pay attention. It just happens.

It wasn't real long after that I decided to move and I bought my own house. Within the first 6 months, while driving our new van, I knocked the mirror off the side of the van by running into the door of the garage. A couple months after that I did it again, this time hitting the other side and knocking the mirror right off so that goes to show that it really isn't

one of those chosen behaviors because who in their “right mind” would do that to their own things? Not too many that I know.

AND THEN I MET JESUS!

I have always believed that Jesus loved me and died for my sins. I have had some great teachers over the years who gave me the foundation of what Christians need to know and how they ought to live. My Aunt Bernice Larson was a great example of unconditional love. She was always there to help even in the midst of dealing with running a grocery store/bar/restaurant and having to deal with my Uncle Tom's struggle with alcoholism. He wasn't a very nice drunk and Bernice was able to step in and handle it all with grace. Her patience was immeasurable and her ability to smile through it all only came from one source . . . her faith in God. It was no surprise to some of us that when she was diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor that was expected to take her life within years if not months, that she was completely healed and lived well into her 80's to continue to bless us with her presence.

My parents, Mike and Betty Larson were also living examples of the Golden Rule and what the Bible tells us about how we should be treating others. If there was anyone in need they would be there. Whether it was mom working the lunch stand at the York Rodeo or helping at Bernice and Tom's Store in York or Jan's Bar in Pigeon Falls, if they called she would be there.

And dad spent tons of time helping at the York Baseball Diamond and announced every year at the rodeo. He also trusted people to do as he would do in life and never hesitated to help though he paid a high price for it. One night he stopped to help a guy who had a motorcycle accident only to find it was staged. He was robbed, beaten and left for dead.

He also sold a guy our farm on a land contract only to have the farm go belly up forcing dad to re-sell it at a loss. Then he had a milk route that he had spent his life building to be a profitable enterprise that would have had him set for retirement. He went into partnership with a young man who had grown up in the neighborhood but he never dreamed this trusted friend would have embezzled dad's entire life savings away. And yet in all of his experiences of betrayal he didn't hold grudges. Dad died a man of honor, loved by multitudes but broke.

There were many Sunday School and Vacation Bible School Teachers that stand out too like Wilma, Violet, Thea, Betty and Leona. And then

there were others that didn't stand out as much then as they do now, one of them is my friend Jain. Jain isn't much older than me but I remember her being a helper during Vacation Bible School and making me feel like I mattered. Her mom died when she was just 16 and she survived it. Now that I have been re-acquainted for several years I have watched her go through other tragedies and family deaths and yet she presses on. Just the weekend before I decided to write this book my husband Ralph and I were in desperate need of a getaway Jain welcomed us to a relaxing night at St. Anthony's Retreat Center in Marathon, Wisconsin and that is just what we needed! What a blessing!

I learned a lot in Confirmation Class too but having to memorize the Catechism and the Nicene Creed was nearly impossible for this ADHD brain of mine but it got me going on the idea of memorizing scripture. We had a pretty big class of people including my neighbor David Olson and my classmates Jeff Dokkestul and my biggest crush of the year, Gary Larson.

I had known Gary my whole life and had "endured" sitting on the bus going through endless boxes of baseball cards trying to pretend that I actually knew who half of these guys were. Even if I did know the day before because he had quizzed me I wouldn't remember the next day and of course that would irritate him so then I tried to get on a different path with him and get him to help me with my math. I was not doing well in math but that wasn't a good relationship building thing either because he was so smart that he just didn't understand somebody who didn't get it. (Did you ever notice that math teachers seem to have great difficulty understanding why you don't get the concept of doing math with letters in and outside of parentheses???) He would get so flabbergasted that I didn't get it that I decided I didn't need to feel anymore blonde than I already was so I started sitting more with my classmate Iris Thundercloud and singing "Going to the Chapel" instead.

Now the David, Gary and Jeff and I had been together since the days of the one room schoolhouse in York, (Wisconsin) where Ted Hanson was our teacher and we were the only 4 kids in the entire class in York.

Pastor B. taught confirmation and the only lesson I actually remember was from Genesis 17 but had I known what was coming I would have skipped class that night!! Pastor B. starts out with reading the scripture." Then God said to Abraham . . . ¹⁰This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, that you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised . . ."

So I expect Pastor B. was hoping to just coast through that one with no questions but I wanted him to know that I was paying attention and

that I wanted to actually pass confirmation class by being involved so I just had to ask, since I had never heard the term, or at least not that I remembered so I asked “Pastor B. what is circumcision?”

The boys started to look at each other and began turning shades of red knowing full well what was going to happen next and what the Pastor would have to explain.

Sensing their anxiety, I think Pastor was trying to make it a no big deal event so he just calmly stated “Oh that’s where they just remove the foreskin” and then he quickly moved on. The boys looked relieved that he didn’t say “the word” but they knew me well enough to know I probably would put them through their misery anyway and since I really didn’t know what the Pastor was talking about I had to ask “The foreskin of what Pastor B.?”

Silence fell. Gary rolled his eyes and gave a nervous little laugh. Faces reddened even more in the pubescent males in the room knowing that “the word” was going to have to be spoken out loud, yes, right there, in the church, in front of this mixed, vulnerable class of hormone raging, irrational thinking, emotionally fragile adolescents, just like that . . . with no warning, like a commercial about Tampons when you are sitting watching *Lassie* or *Leave it To Beaver!* he said the word . . . PENIS . . . Circumcision is cutting off the foreskin of the penis, Pastor B. said.

Now I have 3 older brothers so I have heard lots of things over the years but hearing my Pastor talking about whacking skin off of penis’s in church was more than I could handle!!! Isn’t there enough other Bible passages to talk to adolescents about besides THAT?? This is one of those things that should be between a boy, his penis and his doctor but since we are talking about an 8 day old boy and God’s command to the church I guess the pastor and his parents would have to be involved too but why did I need to learn about it now? I didn’t have any kids and it really wasn’t affecting me was it?

I was really glad when that chapter and the old testament in general was over and we got on with the good stuff like learning and singing that “Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so.”. I also learned that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and that if I asked Him he would forgive me. Psalm 51:2 says “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Now there’s a word I use every day; iniquity. Gotta analyze it now you know . . . I know it’s related to being naughty, but what’s the root word here? Quit? Wow . . . check this out . . . *In-I-quit-y* Guess the message is that if something is bad we should say “I quit” and then we would be IN the presence of God as He wants us to be. I had learned the

basics but God was not the Lord of my life. I was still “in” a lot of things that it was time to say “I quit” to.

I have spent the last 37 years trying to understand the book we talked about in confirmation class and I will be honest, there are a lot of questions that I still have about why God came up with the things He did like that whole circumcision thing . . . what’s up with that God??? I am not trying to be disrespectful but we are human and if we wait until we understand or agree with everything we can’t make sense of we will be making excuses forever why not to follow God. I will reserve my questions for when I get there and can ask Him face to face but I know by then I won’t care. It’s much easier to just let it go!

Relationship Not just a Religion

Now back in the 70’s, when I was a flower child with my peace belt, halter top, beaded headband and marijuana earrings we did a lot of things that contributed to the whole addictive problems that those of us in Wisconsin enjoy, or at least we think we enjoy them. Here it is 2013 and once again, Wisconsin has taken the lead in the nation in binge drinking and unfortunately we are also number one in suicide. I believe there is a direct correlation to alcohol consumption and making bad decisions like killing yourself. If you were depressed before you started drinking, alcohol is a depressant and as some people call it liquid courage. The combination is literally deadly.

It was the spring of 1976 when things were starting to fall apart in my life. My 1st marriage was about to end and I was up to my ears in addictions I just couldn’t shake. My biggest struggles were with alcohol and drugs and getting attention from anyone who would give it to me and all of these things led me to doing other things I later regretted. Many of them I have no recollection of, but waking up and realizing, or hearing about what I had said and done was more than I could handle some days which unfortunately, usually led me to another drink so I would feel better and the cycle would continue, but something happened that year that changed me.

Jill Johnston was a 16 year old girl who was a waitress at Sambo’s Restaurant in Wausau, Wisconsin where I was working and she was showing me the ropes of the restaurant. I would tell her about my escapades and she would pray for me. I was trying to get her to explore the fun life and she was trying to get me to realize there was a better life.

She finally invited me to the Wausau Bible Church and I agreed to go but when she got to my house I made up some excuse and I never went but she didn't give up.

She kept talking to me about Jesus and the great life He had planned for me if I would just turn it over. She encouraged me to read the Bible but I couldn't understand that King James version so she brought me "The Living Bible—The Way" a new "hippie version" we called it, in plain English and WOW it actually made sense!

It was that book and that list of problems in the first few pages of the Bible that showed you where to go to find the answers to your problems that literally saved my life and got me here today to write this book for you. It taught me the importance of memorizing God's word because when I have nothing else to hang on to and no one else to believe in and it doesn't feel like anyone cares, I know that God does and we all need that. He does for me what I can't do for myself.

These are some of the first topics I went to and the verses I eventually memorized that have helped me countless times over the last 37 years. All these verses were from that Bible.

"If you are anxious"

Phillipians 4:6-7. ⁶ Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. ⁷ If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

"If you don't know what to do"

James 1:2-8² Dear brothers, is your life full of difficulties and temptations? Then be happy, ³ for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. ⁴ So let it grow, and don't try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you will be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete.

⁵ If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it. ⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to tell you, for a doubtful mind will be as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind;

⁷⁻⁸ and every decision you then make will be uncertain, as you turn first this way and then that. If you don't ask with faith, don't expect the Lord to give you any solid answer

“If you have sinned” Psalm 51:10

¹⁰ Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires.

“If you are afraid” Isaiah 41:10

¹⁰ Fear not, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.^[a]

I needed to hear these things because the craziness of the “free love” and “psychedelic haze” of the 70's as well as the passage of Roe V. Wade in 1973 had devastated my world. At the time it seemed I was making the right decisions and enjoying life but the way that many of us were living at that time and the things that we were doing to ourselves and others brought about a chain reaction of events that led to millions of people trying to cope in ill found ways like alcohol, drugs and sex. With abortion being legalized in 1973 a new moral dilemma was presented to men and women every day that just added one more thing to the load of guilt and shame that so many people feel over the choices that have been made.

What I have found in my own experience and the hundreds of men and women I have worked with over the years is that it doesn't matter what society thinks, what your doctor says or if every other person in the universe approves of your decision. If in your own heart and soul you know it is not right FOR YOU then you shouldn't do it.

We have all given in to the temptation to take the easy way out only to find it isn't that easy but by then it's too late. It was a huge relief to know that I hadn't gone too far from God to be brought back and start over again. God does have a plan and it's good.

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ You will find me when you seek me, if you look for me in earnest.

But I had a hard time believing that this was possible. I didn't feel worthy of being loved. For so many, God is a God of punishment and anger and I didn't need that in my life so I avoided it all until I read Psalm 103 that says

⁸ He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; he is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love. ⁹ He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever. ¹⁰ He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, ¹¹ for his mercy toward those who fear and honor him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. ¹² He has removed our sins as far away from us as the east is from the west. ¹³ He is like a father to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence him. ¹⁴ For he knows we are but dust ¹⁵ and that our days are few and brief, like grass, like flowers, ¹⁶ blown by the wind and gone forever.

WHEW!!! I was so grateful that God wanted me and could do something valuable with my life if what I was reading was actually true. But how would I know?? There was only one way. Test Him. What did I have to lose?? I was ready to kill myself anyway because I had tried to quit drinking and using drugs. I had tried to make my marriage work and I had wanted to be a mother someday but it all was one big failure. If God was real and if He could change my life and make something good out of it I was going to give Him a shot.

So I got on my knees and I took that Bible that Jill Johnston gave me and I turned to the page "If you have sinned" and I read Psalm 51:10 and I realized that this was the same passage we had sang in church every week during the Offertory. It must have been a little different version than "The Way" Bible but it had the same meaning. It was the prayer of King David, a man who had 1000 wives but was not content enough with what he had once he saw Bethsheeba, the neighbor lady sunning herself. He decided to have her for himself so he sent her husband out to war to be killed, and he was. David summoned Bethsheeba to himself and before long she was pregnant with his child.

God then sent his servant Nahum to David to tell him the parable about the rich man with 1000 sheep and he saw a man who only had 1 sheep and he wanted that sheep so he took the one sheep from the man and went on his way. Nahum asked David what should be done about it and David was upset and said the rich man should be killed. Nahum said that man is you. That is when David saw his wrongdoing and prayed that prayer.

"Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away your presence and take not your holy spirit from

me. Restore unto me the joy of that salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.”

I asked God at that point to forgive me for all the things I had said and done that were wrong and I asked Him to help me change. I asked Him to make me sick at the thought of alcohol or drugs or anything else that wasn't from Him. And then I threw out the fleece “Oh, and God, either change me by tomorrow or I am going to kill myself”

The next day was our scheduled rehearsal for the “gig” that me and my brother and our friends had set up at my aunt and uncles bar in York, a town of 32 people. Not 32 hundred . . . just 32. The Larsons, the Rogstads, the Humphreys, the Moes and the Websters. I loved being center stage but I was trying to make this change and I had never been with these guys without being in a party mode.

Then I got a call from a guy who I had been living with after my husband left me. I had broke up with him but he called to say he had a spiritual experience and had given his life to the Lord and wondered if I wanted to move to Phoenix with him for the winter. Holy cow! I didn't know what to do but I went to the band practice and I asked God that if this isn't your will to give me a sign.

I picked up the microphone and I got a shock. Wow . . . what's that about? “God is that you?” I question. “If it's you, give me another sign.”

I was like Gideon, who at one time was weak in his faith and when God asked him to do something he asked for a sign to be sure that what he was hearing was really from God. He said God if you are speaking to me show me by making this fleece wet in the night and the ground around it be dry and the next morning he had to wring out the fleece that was soaked with water. Then he asked another thing and said please Lord if this is you give me another sign and make the ground wet and the fleece dry and God did it.

So I had asked for a sign and this was it. I asked God if he wanted me to go and play in this bar thing and I was getting a sign but I wasn't sure so I asked again. God if that was you give me another sign and just then the light bulb right above me exploded . . . not just a flicker but broke. That was it. I knew God was talking to me but now what do I say? Gee guys sorry I have to quit the band, God told me to?

I didn't have the courage to do that but the next night when we went to play at the bar I walked in and smelled the cigarettes and booze and I physically got ill and went to the bathroom to throw up. I sang a song or

two then I went back to my parents and made arrangements to move to Phoenix.

There are a lot of things I could say and talk about and explain about that led up to my consideration of ending my life that September night in 1976 but I don't think this is the right time for my WHOLE life story. Let me suffice to say that I had made a lot of bad decisions in the 19 years I had been on earth that did not help me much and other people in my life did things that weren't right but as I look at it all now, it was those experiences that led me to where I am at today. Ultimately, it was that pain that led me to Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of my faith."

And it is my faith that leads me to write this book so those of you reading it can know that no matter what you have done, no matter what others have done to you, there is NOTHING on this earth that isn't overcomeable . . . (hmmm it's underlined in red . . . is it spelled wrong? Maybe it's overcomeable no still underlined?? Hmmm let me look it up . . . WHAT?? It's not a word? Not in WIKI? Why not? Insurmountable is a word that means the same thing so why can't you use the able on overcome . . . hmmm interesting . . . check this out! insurmount isn't a word. What is up with that?? Surmount is a word but not insurmount. Maybe I have to add an in to the overcome so it would be inovercomeable right?? How stupid is the English language anyway???

HEY! Great news! I just found the word online (spelled overcomeable) and Chrissy Schaefer from Smart Move Inc. is a pretty smart lady (probably why she works for Smart Move ☺) She is a life coach and she wrote this article "Let's talk about BARRIERS" where she actually has a definition that explains what I was talking about. She says that "overcomeable barriers are things that we can creatively work around." And that is so true! And for me working around my barriers requires me to trust in someone who knows what's on the other side of the barrier and has the ability to tear it down and for me that is God.

Now that I have spent like 2 hours on that whole word deal thing, let's just say that WITH JESUS ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE. That is probably why Paul said it that way. He probably knew or at least had heard about how dumb the English language is.

RELATIONSHIPS

When you have “issues” and illnesses, relationships can be very challenging. Hence the high divorce rate. The more broken homes there are the more “issues” people have that are brought into the next generation. If we don’t learn how to deal with life on life’s terms we will have problems.

The best advice I have ever gotten was that “Expectations are pre-meditated resentments.” We all are raised with values which lead us to have those expectations of others. Work ethic, modesty, kindness, politeness, gratitude, empathy, respect and appreciation are just a few of the values that lead us to have expectations of others to behave in those ways. God actually gave us the 12 commandments as a baseline of values and behavior that he expects us to follow but the problem exists in our human world is what do we do when people don’t do what WE expect them to do? How do we handle it?

That too depends on how we are raised. Some people get smacked around if they don’t do what their parents or spouse wants them to. For some families yelling and swearing is a norm. For some families the silence is how things are handled when people get upset. Some people hurt themselves by eating, or not eating, or drinking or using drugs, or acting out sexually, or gambling, or shopping. All of these ways affect our entire society and certainly is generational in many ways.

What I know for sure is that throughout my career as a waitress for 20 years, then a School Counselor for 5 years then an Outpatient Therapist for 5 years and now a Career Counselor and the Co-Founder/President/Social Worker for a homeless program for recovering alcoholics, addicts and people with mental illnesses, I have seen identification and communication of feelings to be a primary problem in our society. People are quick to anger and react in anger and if we could all understand that

anger is always secondary and there is something underneath it that we need to identify and address we will be much better off.

I am on my 3rd marriage. I am not going to go into the first two now but I can tell you that I believe that had I known and understood in the beginning what I know now I would not be a sad statistic of failed marriages. I realize now that I have no control over what anyone else does. I can't make them do what I want them to do. I can't force them to bring me flowers or remember my birthday or take me to dinner and if I try to by making them feel bad or guilty or stupid I am only contributing to the disintegration of the relationship.

This is true for all relationships in all places and in all countries. If you think about it war in and of itself is initiated because of different values, fears, attitudes and behaviors and rather than working to find a way to come to a middle ground we dig our heels in and offer to fight instead and does it really solve any long term problem or does it just serve to deepen the resentments.

As I said before, expectations are PRE-MEDITATED resentments. That means that we decide that we are going to develop a resentment and hold a grudge against someone. How crazy is that? Why would anyone do that on purpose? We rationalize, because I am right. Because I was treated poorly. Because it's about me, me, me. So we willingly allow something to divide and conquer and destroy something important to us. Something like our jobs, our marriages, our relationships with friends, childrens, co-workers and even ourselves, yes even ourselves. We get resentful toward ourselves . . . more on that later.

Consider the work world. As a career counselor I spend every week helping people deal with issues of unemployment. And losing your job is a grief issue. You expect when you get a job you are going to be paid fairly, on time. You expect you will be treated with respect and that you will be doing what you got hired to do not something else. You will actually be at your job for more than a couple of months and if not you will have plenty of notice to get things in order and find another job. You will be able to draw unemployment until you find another job and you will have an option to get affordable insurance.

Good luck with that. The reality is that Wisconsin, and many other states are at will states which means employers can hire and fire at will. No reason needed. No warning required. They can come in and say goodbye you are done and hire their best friend. Not that employers all do that but be honest, if you had someone who was an "OK" worker and

your best friend was about to lose their house and be homeless and you could hire them but you had to let the OK employee go would you do it? Why? Because you could.

And they say they will get back to you? Fact is, they don't have time, or money to contact every person that they get resumes from or even that they may interview. It's all about money. Make a buck, save a buck and it's your job to develop your product which is YOU and research your customer which is THE EMPLOYER and develop your marketing plan to convince them that you are the best product on the market and worthy of consideration. But just be aware that even if you get a job some researchers have estimated that a long term job may be 2-3 years and McDonalds gets 150 applications for one job so saying you'll have to settle for McDonald's, good luck with that. Not only is losing a job a grief issue but finding one can be as well.

So how do you deal with it? How do you not get angry? I hate to say that you plan on getting fired or for things to not go like you want but you have to reframe your thinking. When my job changed and I had to start traveling all over I didn't like it. As a matter of fact I got sick, tendinitis, migraines, ulcers, back problems and finally angina that sent me to the hospital for a heart catheterization. The long and short of it I didn't like my job anymore so I had a few options. Accept the things I couldn't change or change the things I could. I didn't have much choice in changing things so that left accepting it and that required me to think differently which didn't take real long to figure that out. Look at the positive I have a job, I have insurance! Quit complaining! Lo and behold my ulcers went away, I have no problem with tendonitis, back pain is gone and migraines generally only happen when I reinjure my shoulder or get stressed about other things that I have learned how to better manage.

We have to reframe things and actually change the expectations that we are starting with. Without this, I may have been looking at a 3rd divorce because my previous expectations of how I SHOULD be treated didn't take into consideration the other persons feelings, values and ways of dealing with things. It's not that you should lay down and be abused. That is not what I am saying. Codependency is another problem that many of us have to work on which is part of what causes the bad feelings we have because we feel obligated to do things for people because our self-esteem is all wrapped up in what people say about us, to us and how they demonstrate that.

There are tons of books out there to help with better understanding others like Gary Chapman's *The 5 Love Languages*. This book helps people realize that some of us show our love by giving gifts and others show love by doing stuff still others give love by saying nice things etc. If you don't understand that your husband is showing how much he loves you by changing the oil on your car you are missing the message. And if you like to write him poetry but he likes his clothes washed and ironed on time then you have to consider what is important to him.

The same thing holds true with children. We have a tendency, actually a pervasive epidemic, of noticing what others, especially children, do wrong not what they do right. *The Power of Positive Students*, another great book which is a great companion to *The Power of Positive Parenting* talk about some studies that have been done and as I recall, one study showed that children need 8 positives to every negative. Think about it! Does ANYONE do that??? But the engagement of employees, students and children and everyone else in the world is significantly increased with positive reinforcement as opposed to shame and negative consequences. Our criminal justice system is set up in the same sort of way and hasn't been very successful in rehabilitating people when we are just trying to "treat" the symptom and not address the underlying "issues."

So how does this relate to me and my book and my issues? I certainly sound like I know what I am talking about but why is it that my behavior at times seems "hypocritical" and that I could if I wanted to because I "know better" and am just "making excuses." There is a difference between an excuse and an explanation just like there is between a can't and a won't. And what teachers, parents, employers and loved ones need to understand is that just because they were able to do it yesterday or because they can stay focused on Nintendo they should be able to study for that exam and pass it. Not even in the same ball park.

Computer games like Nintendo or Playstation or XBox give immediate/frequent feedback with rewards and consequences. They do good they move a level, get a new gadget or weapon etc. They do bad they die or get injured or lose points, privileges or gadgets. We don't do that for them. We give them a text book after lecturing at them for hours and hours when they were zoned out thinking about eating lunch and then tell them to read a zillion pages and memorize everything that you think is important but you don't tell them what that is so it's a crap shoot and most of us with ADHD have said screw it at the lecture stage

and do poorly because we don't have the immediate or at least frequent feedback . . . at least SOME feedback besides an F on the final exam.

So the point is, communication is key and we need to rethink how, why and when we are doing it and what our communication methods are going to impact the people we are communicating with. Granted we can't always know. I am taking a huge risk at rejection for publishing this book without enough time to really analyze everything but that's part of our problem too. We are so afraid of communicating that we just don't. Being sensitive and considerate is good but being more concerned about what someone thinks than doing what we know we should be doing is worth taking a look at.

So how do you find happiness and joy in life and relationships then? How do you really do what you were created to do??

FINDING PASSION BALANCE AND HOW IT RELATES TO FAMILY

This next section is from the meditation book I started writing and committed to doing every day for 365 days so that like Zig Zigler I would finish a book in a year by writing just one page a day. Made sense except for the fact that it only lasted about 3 days. That's another thing waiting to happen and if I can ever find "balance" in my life I can perhaps focus on the things that are good for me, like doing more daily meditations. This one just seemed to fit and gave me a couple pages I didn't have to write. At the moment I have about 2 hours to finish this book and get it emailed off!

Finding Passion and Balance

Finding balance is something that we all need but some of us have great difficulty with. As far back as I can remember my loved ones, counselors, doctors, pastors, friends, bosses and even acquaintances have told me is that I need more balance in my life. I need to slow down. I need to rest. I need to not be so obsessed. What does that mean?? How do I do it? Why don't I do it?

Encarta has several description of "balance"—Obviously my friends have been talking about definition #3—"mental steadiness or emotional stability; habit of calm behavior, judgment, etc."

Wikipedia has a relative definition as well—“In the metaphysical or conceptual sense, balance is used to mean a point between two opposite forces that is desirable over purely one state or the other.”

My problem with balance is that I am a very passionate person. Whether it is a cause I believe in or a person I care about it always has challenged me to remain balanced.

Wikipedia describes passion as a “feeling of unusual excitement, enthusiasm or compelling emotion, a positive affinity or love, towards a subject, idea, person, or object.” It also says “passions overwhelm reason time and again.”

There’s my problem. I am too passionate. It’s true. Not that passion is a bad thing when directed in the right way, at the right time for the right reasons.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 says “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; . . .”

There is only one way to find out what it means for me to stay balanced. James 1 reminds us that if we want to know what God wants us to do we should ask Him and He will tell us. That’s my answer. The next problem is my willingness to be obedient to what He says. Over the years my passion to right wrongs, fix problems and sweep someone off their feet has led to me usurping God’s authority and His will in someone else’s life. It’s not my place to fix it. It’s my place to be a vessel of God’s plan when he calls me to do so, not before.

Today I seek balance. I seek to know when God wants me to work and when he wants me to rest and even how He wants me to rest because I even rationalize that it is relaxing for me to help someone else because it lessens my load of concern for them. In other words I am not trusting God to take of them. I will seek to temper my passion for others and focus my love for them in a way that allows God to still be God in their lives and our relationship.

Time to let go and let God. Time to stop letting my passion overwhelm my reasoning.

When I get those kinds of messages it is a reminder of how things SHOULD be and why we SHOULD be spending more time listening

than just talking. Passion is a good thing when directed appropriately in the direction it should be directed. My problem has always been what that should be. Starting Randlin Homes was not MY passion. It was MY passion to support my husband Ralph in doing what he felt God was calling him to do. I was just going to help but somewhere along the line it became MY passion too but unfortunately, my passion got out of control along with my enthusiasm, my faith and my logic. I still haven't figured it all out. I am still trying to figure out why the things I believed so strongly and waited so patiently haven't worked out as I thought they would. Part of it is because I feel a bit like Jonah who is sitting in the belly of the whale.

Sometimes God gives us direction and we question it. We are afraid. All stress is fear based. Think about it! ALL stress is FEAR based. So what am I afraid of? Afraid of rejection, failure, missing the boat?. So many things that get all messed up when we are unsure of things but that is why it's important to figure out our purpose in life and start heading in that direction. Once you are doing your passion you will know it, but that doesn't mean it's easy to keep it focused. And for those of us hyper-maniacal types doing things impulsively (like writing a book in 10 days or have a) it can be pretty hard to maintain your sanity.

HEY LET'S START A NON-PROFIT!

One of my many Counselor's once suggested that perhaps it was possible that I preferred chaos over serenity. Far be it from me to enjoy being spread too thin and enjoy dealing with crazy stuff all the time but now, at the age of 58, I realize I have spent the majority of those years doing just that. Fortunately God does work it all for the good!

My husband Ralph and I were 1/3 of the way through surviving three teenage daughters in the home with Mandi, Ralph's oldest daughter graduated and a mom already. We still had Heather, my 18 year old daughter and Crystal, Ralph's 14 year old daughter at home. We also had Jay, Ralph's 5 year old son who was stuck in the terrible two stage at home and Ralph's 18 year old autistic son Adam who was in a group home.

I was working full time at the Job Center and part time at either the Center for Human Development as a Counselor, then Upper Iowa University as an Instructor and later at Northcentral Technical College as an Instructor. The whole story on how Ralph and I got together is

another crazy book in itself but to get to the point we were doing our best to make a go of this blended, blended, blended family.

We didn't really have a burning desire to start a non-profit but it began with Ralph becoming very ill and was unable to continue his job at the sheltered workshop where he had been employed 60 miles from home. With having already passed nearly 200 kidney stones and surviving 2 intestinal surgeries for his Crohn's disease, his health was getting worse and he was just not able to be reliable.

Though the doctor said he was incapable of working, a child support order still expected payment or he would be facing jail. An opportunity came up for him to help a friend start a group home for recovering alcoholics. He found it he was very rewarding and he was able to work around his illnesses and be an example at the same time of how to deal with chronic pain without going back to using alcohol and drugs.

The lady that was running the group home ended up moving so the owner asked Ralph to take over. Later that year they decided to open a 2nd group home that would be managed, under Ralph's direction, by a lady who was quite new in the recovery program. Because this was a new business venture there wasn't much money in it at all but Ralph really enjoyed it.

The partnership, and Ralph continuing to supervise this woman was not a good thing for any of us yet we had all developed a concern for the many alcoholics and addicts coming out of treatment who were living on the street or who needed more support to make it in the world. My co-worker at the Job Center and I had been talking about the many veterans he was working with and that we had both tried getting jobs but when people are sick and homeless it is nearly impossible to get them jobs.

It was in early December of 2000 when my daughter Heather, Ralph and my Co Worker Gary and I decided to start a non-profit for those with substance abuse disorders that needed help. We were going to focus on veterans because Gary said there was a lot of federal funding for homeless veterans so we filed the paperwork and became an official 501(c)(3) in June of 2001.

After that meeting Ralph knew that he had some changing to do if we were going to do this and he decided he wanted for us to go to Phoenix Arizona to see my friends Randy and Linda Thompson whose music CD's had inspired Ralph in many ways. Ralph knew he needed spiritual guidance and our relationship needed healing so we flew down and spent a few days making our final decision to make the change and start our

own group home. Randy made it clear to Ralph that he had to cut all ties with his co-worker and we need to trust God to get this new ministry off on the right foot.

We came back and started looking for a house for our group home and with the help of a friend who loaned us \$20,000 we were able to buy a 6 bedroom home on the Northwest side of Wausau. Within a few days we had our first Vietnam Veteran who was in the Northcentral Health Care Center detoxing from an extended drinking binge. His drinking partner was placed with us a few days later and our non-profit was on it's way.

Whose deal is it? We can't let them die can we?

For the last 12 years we have watched the continual decline of services to this population. We got started because things had changed in our community and there was a need and what we are asking more and more is whose responsibility is it to help them?

Whether it's heart surgery or detox for substance abuse, funding is only available for critically ill people who might die without treatment. Even if they still need help there isn't much that can be done when insurance puts the skids on it or if you don't have insurance at all. It has gotten to the point that if you don't have a method, a means and a plan to kill yourself or someone else there is no help available. Rare is the chance when someone can check themselves in to the hospital or mental health center because they fear they are going to use, or harm themselves. If they don't have a specific plan it's not "good enough." Hospitals and treatment centers are closing left and right and the scarcity of psychiatric help has left millions of people across the country without the treatment they need to get their mental health and substance abuse issues under control.

Though the Veterans Administration has wonderful hospitals and care for SOME veterans by their own admission, at least when we began our services, they only reached about 10% of the homeless veterans out there and part of that was because many of them have criminal records, probation officers or are not mentally and medically stable enough to manage their own medications to be in their programs for the homeless yet they aren't sick enough to be in the VA hospitals.

The whole system was a shock to us. We didn't know that those who had actually served in the military, sometimes for years may not be eligible for benefits because they were "peace time" veterans or because

they didn't serve "enough" time or because they were in the National Guard or Reserves without enough "active" duty. Some had their mental breakdowns while in the military and that was the case with several of the Vietnam Veterans we served over the years. They fell apart, resorted to "coping or self-medicated" in inappropriate ways that led to unacceptable behavior which led to a less than honorable discharge which led to a denial of any kind of benefits. It is like we talked about earlier, ill found ways of coping that carried with them into their military service and was exacerbated.

These veterans, consequently had even more "issues" to deal with regarding their anger toward the whole military service and their sense of betrayal first by the military and then by the American people when they came home from Vietnam and were spit on. The large majority of the men and women we have worked with were alienated from their families and friends who washed their hands of them because they were tired of their continued self-defeating and use and abuse of people who had tried to help.

So the problems for us and our residents began to grow when funding was cut and they were forced to move out of our home. It became obvious that they still needed help. Some of them would last a couple of weeks, some a few days and some never even made it to their new apartment before getting drunk.

Many of them would go into detox and get a bus token to come home and not ever make it because they were still craving because their "treatment" was often until they blew a zero and their vitals were stable which did not get rid of the cravings after being drunk 24/7 for days if not weeks. And many times they had no place "real" to go. They may say they are going to a friends but no one ever checked on it but these people at that point were more concerned about getting out, having a smoke and getting another bottle to manager their cravings or to try to face the same life situation that led them to drink to begin with that hadn't been fixed when they spent their day or two or even month or two in treatment. They were still homeless, and jobless and friendless with no help in sight so the cycle repeats itself until they die or are debilitated enough that they qualify for assisted living or long term hospitalization.

Where are these people supposed to go if the agencies that are required law to keep people safe from themselves and others can't help them because the laws themselves say that people have a right to not be protected from themselves have to be enforced. Consequently going to

jail may be the safest place for them if the medical and mental health facilities can't help them. Some of the people deliberately get in trouble, and actually time it so they have a warm bed and food for the winter.

So whose responsibility is it to help these homeless, sick people, many of them veterans who served our country, who have been left behind?

Matthew 5 quotes the words of Jesus when He was talking about who was going to be rewarded in Heaven and why

34“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. **35**For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36**I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38**When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39**When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

40“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Since that day in 1976 when I committed my life to do whatever God gave me opportunity to do to help others I have attempted to do that. It has not been easy but these versus really give me no choice in reaching out to “the least of these.” And herein lies the reason why Randlin Homes has continued to grow despite the logic of business people who said “it can't be done.” The passion to follow the voice that said “If you Build it They Will come” led us toward the trek toward that “Field of Dreams that we knew we would never be able to do without divine intervention and that we got.

The “they” we were banking on was more than the residents who would come but the donors that would support us, the volunteers that would help us and the agencies that would fund us and all of these things have happened. We, and our residents and their families, friends, employers, counselors and doctors are grateful but as always we still have unmet needs because there is even more people now on the street than ever before and we get referrals all the time that we can't help because we don't have enough housing or enough staff to manage them.

There is an old saying that “It takes the whole village to raise a child” and we believe the same principal applies to the homeless, the mentally

ill, the addicts and alcoholics and ex-offenders who are in need of rehabilitation.

So whose responsibility is it? It is all of ours. We must work together and set aside whose turf is it, whose religion is right, whose program is better, whose money should pay, whose services should be provided, and whether or not we feel like it. Let's just "get er done" before more of them die. l.

Building a foundation? What is that?

When we started Randlin Homes we had a good business plan and were doing OK with Ralph and Heather volunteering. Eventually there was enough revenue being generated to pay staff a couple hundred dollars a month. Heather eventually got a job as a Pharmacy Technician and we were in need of another live in staff member. Right about then I was interviewing a blind woman who wanted to start volunteering to run groups and do counseling/tutoring.

When I got to her house and pulled in the driveway a gentleman came out and asked me if I would move my car as I was blocking him in. He looked familiar, kind of an unforgettable face because he was a burn victim. It was a sad story that left him scarred for life in more ways than physically. I asked him if we didn't know each other from somewhere and he said he wasn't sure. I mentioned the Alano club in Wausau and he said that may have been it. I explained to him why I was there and what we did at Randlin Homes and he said he'd like to volunteer to do some "12 step work" and I knew that he also was a recovering person familiar with the kind of program we were running.

A few days later I got a call from him. He was living at Salvation Army after he and his girlfriend broke up and he said he would like to volunteer. He came over and met the residents and did an awesome job so we offered to have him come and live at Randlin as our 2nd live in staff.

About a year later Heather decided it was time to move on so we were in need of finding another live in care provider. It's not as easy as you might think to find someone to do that and we hadn't yet decided how to go about finding one when my co-worker, who had never made a referral to me before, contacted me about a lady who was looking for work. She said the woman knew my husband so I sat down and talked with her about her background. The lady had been a live in care provider for a number of years taking care of elderly people but she was just tired of having them die. I asked her if she liked the type of job it was and what

kind of people she might enjoy working with and she had no problem with alcoholic, middle aged men with criminal records and she said that was no trouble at all. I referred her to Ralph to see if she might be a good fit and sure enough she moved in and was with us for several years. She did a great job at the fair booths and benefits and she really cared about the residents we had over the years

As I am now looking at the clock and realize I only have an hour to wrap up this book I clearly cannot tell you all the awesome “God things” that have happened at Randlin Homes or how all my impulsive and irrational decisions did both harm and good. What I do want to tell you is that the trek to go from one 6 bedroom home to two 6 bedroom homes, a 20 bed home, a 5 bed duplex and a 2 bedroom home duplex with a 3 bedroom and a 2 bedroom home has been a rollercoaster and we have fewer paid staff now than we did with just one house.

One of the biggest challenges is that I have been the “growth visionary” since the onset and in hindsight I wish I would have been able to be more patient and would have encouraged Ralph and let him make the decisions on when and if we were going to open more homes.

Part of my rationale in being pushy was that I had been on the “faith walk” a lot longer than Ralph and just figured that since I had seen God do wonderful things that He could take care of things if we just followed through so in **2003 the first transition home was opened for two residents who were ready to move to the next level but had realized their need for ongoing supervision and support. More apartments were opened as residents left the licensed home on 10th Avenue and eventually we began transitioning people directly off the street or from the salvation army, jail and prison cells, hospitals and detox centers into our new apartments.**

As part of that “miracle God things” In **2005 Randlin Homes received the donation of a historical home that would not have been best utilized as a transitional home so it was sold and the income was used to purchase a 6 bedroom home on South 4th Avenue in Wausau.**

By the end of **2007 the agency was operating two 6 bedroom homes and 5 apartments but as the job market waned and funding became even more difficult to come by, the agency began looking at ways to become self-sufficient. Business enterprises became the saving grace of our Reintegration Assistance Program.**

THE REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RAP)

The RAP Program and Enterprise Businesses intention is to serve as a one year education and training program designed to provide the student/residents social, educational and vocational skill development that will offer the best chance at recovery and long term self-sufficiency. We believe it takes at least a year to “get well” after returning from war or having spent many years living on the streets, in homeless shelters, jails or hospitals. This program gives them a chance to rediscover their personal assets, find a sense of purpose in a very positive environment, give back to the community and most importantly develop HOPE for the future.

The RAP program first evaluates each student’s interests, abilities, skills and values to determine a career path to consider as well as a treatment program for those with mental or physical health illnesses or substance abuse issues. This is an “each one teach one program” and we utilize professional volunteers and minimally paid staff and the residents themselves as “life coaches” to provide support in their recovery. Our goals and previously observed results have indicated that this program has had a positive effect including:

1. Increase in self esteem and HOPE
2. Improvement/maintenance of both mental health and sobriety
3. Compliance in probation and parole orders
4. Development of new skills that have and will continue to prepare them for self-sufficiency to include the possibility of the following

Customer Service & Sales

General Remodeling & Home Repair

Landscaping and Yard Care

Accounting and bookkeeping

Furniture refinishing and repair

Business and supervisory skills

Marketing and promotions

Jewelry.Crafts Etc

Sewing, embroidery

Cleaning and Home Care

Snow Removal

Inventory & Quality Control

Personal cares

Cooking /baking

Improvement in academic skills

Online sales and networking

Small engine repair

Woodworking

Ceramics, sculpting etc	Greeting card, stamping
Transportation services	Office Support/Computer Managerial
Care Provider	Pricing & staging

5. Academic achievement is worked on by attaining a GED/HSED and the National National Career Readiness Certificate offered by ACT
6. Self sufficiency either through the acquisition of a new job or disability benefits
7. Overcoming self—defeating behaviors like substance abuse, eating disorders, gambling and sex addictions, negative relationships and others through consistent attendance at counseling, recovery groups and self—help groups.

OUR ENTERPRISE BUSINESSES

Our training program started in August of 2008 with a brat fry fundraiser at Walmart and soon after we were asked to rake leaves for a disabled Korean Veteran. Our residents volunteered to do yard care and shovel snow, and do small engine repair. Seventy five community members responded with generous donations.

By the end of 2008 we found ourselves with so many donations that had been given for our veterans to transition with that we couldn't keep it all. With such an outpouring we got to thinking that maybe we should open a thrift store.

In March of 2009, with the rest of the money from the home that had been donated, we were able to purchase a Store Front at 1006 North 6th Street in Wausau where we opened the Randlin Thrift Store and Training Center. An addition of student/resident and volunteer artwork led us to the name Randlin Gallery of Hope Thrift Store that began with a flea market type atmosphere. This has since changed a couple of times with the Gallery of Hope Art Store being in different locations and the name is now the One More Time Home Furnishings Store.

By August of 2009, just a few months after opening, we were so packed with goods that we received the donation of the use of a small section of a warehouse to store the overflow until we could sort it

through that turned into a 12,000 square foot store that we operated for 2 years but with no professional paid staff to train our student residents we struggled to make what we could have made on the building. Unfortunately utilities for a building that big was cost prohibitive.

With furniture being our biggest money maker, we submitted a grant and received the donation of a Truck for us to transport furniture and help community members move which brought in another income generator.

In November of 2011 we opened the Randlin Bridges of Hope Furniture Store on the corner of 1st Avenue and Bridge Street in Wausau that that gave us great exposure and up-classed our previous inventory line. The exposure was great but by the end of 2012 it was obvious that we were just breaking even given the cost of overhead for the building. We closed the Bridge Street Store in March of 2013 and opened the Randlin Occupational Training Center at 4317 Stewart Avenue where we would be receiving our donations and teaching students how to manage inventory, clean, repair and refinish furniture.

As I am in the last hour of writing this book you will see that there are probably a lot of things that coulda, shoulda been done differently. This model is my dream of what I believe I could have implemented if I wouldn't have had to work a full time job to be sure we had insurance. There is always a but and BUT is an argument for our limitations and when we argue for our limitations we get to keep them. I have kept the limitation of not doing what I started at Randlin and as a result I have to let go of Randlin Homes because I can't do them both.

Randlin Homes has been our passion for the last 12 years and we believe that it is God's intention to make it what it was intended to be. Ralph and I don't own it and it is exciting to see something you have participated in starting make such a difference in the community that they would see fit to award you with the Red Cross Community Heroes of the Year and to Give me the Prestigious Athena Award. It's not about rewards it's about being a faucet. A vessel of God's love to give hope to those who are wandering in the desert or a lighthouse in the storms of life. All of us are just instruments in God's hands waiting to be made into beautiful music to bring peace to those who long for serenity. It's up to us to be open enough to be used.

We need lots of things to keep it going but as always, God is in charge and He is working on it. I just need to get out of the way and see what will transpire. What I know for sure is that this is an organization with tremendous potential that was intended to be modeled after the Delancey Street foundation in California but we just haven't gotten there. We did what they told us not to do . . . grow to fast! We need more help, more money, more support and someone who has a lot more ability to be organized and not be starting something new before they have finished the last task than I have. And like Stuart Smalley would say "And that;s . . . OK Because I'm good enough and I am smart enough and doggone it people like me!"

FROM A DAUGHTER'S PERSPECTIVE

My daughter Heather was a great kid with the challenges of having mom's house and dad's house to deal with but she was resilient and always seemed to find the good. When talking about all the crazy holiday stuff with her dad now being remarried and having more grandparents to visit she quickly noted that she got more presents now with so many more grandparents!

Then when we had my friends foster daughter over who was very obnoxious and self centered we were talking about the day over dinner. Tammy would not share anything with the other kids and Heathers 8 year old observation was that Tammy had an SD . . . With a School Psychologist and a Counselor in the home Heather was used to the Disability jargon. Her assessment was that Tammy had a SD or Sharing Disability. Dealing with her diabetes and the many other health issues she has had is remarkable and though I have not been the greatest mom I think she learned some positive things about caring for others and she has proven that over and over and without Heather, Randlin Homes would have never begun.

From My Daughter Heather

At the tender age of 9, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. As this would be a challenge for any parent or 9 year old to deal with on a daily basis, having a mother with ADHD made it that much harder! Soon after coming home I realized it probably wasn't a good idea to let my mother take care of my insulin as she started drawing the wrong kind of insulin

which would have sent me into a coma. So I took it upon myself to make sure I had the right medicine, supplies, and foods at all times.

As with any new disease/ situation there were obstacles to overcome, but what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, right? As I grew into a teenager/ young adult I went through an "I'm in charge" phase and gave up taking care of myself. I wasn't going to let anyone tell me what to do or how to do it! Well that backfired pretty quickly as I was hospitalized twice with diabetic ketoacidosis (a shortage of insulin; in response the body switches to burning fatty acids and producing acidic ketone bodies). In my case this shortage of insulin was my own fault. I chose not to check my blood sugars or take my insulin. I think I finally "got it" after the second time and went on to get married, have 3 beautiful children, and am now on an insulin pump and continuous glucose sensor which makes my life and diabetes easier to control!

From My Step Daughter Mandi

I could never have imagined myself her daughter fifteen years ago. Fifteen years ago, it was another transitional phase for my father, and who knew how long it would last I thought. Soon after moving into together though, and then the wedding, it was a "for sure" thing, at least for a while.

Of course those were my teenage years and they were challenging to say the least. I did survive however and have been blessed throughout my thirty two years. Thanks to God and my family . . . and even Linda, who will "never be my mother".

I can still remember the smell of Linda's apartment the first time we went there. An eclectic personality, with an apartment full of stuff, and an odd smell was how I first remember Linda. She and my father seemed to connect and we all lived in that honeymoon phase together for quite some time.

Over the course of my high school years Linda and I had our ups and downs of a typical step-mom and step-daughter relationship. Her Master's degree in counseling really helped to keep our family together through thick and thin though. And it wasn't until the last few years when I realized how much her faith in God poured over us all.

As the oldest in the family, I think the differences in personalities, characteristics, and lifestyle was hard for me. I was raised in what I considered a "well off" home until I was ten. My parents were married,

and while I had a younger brother at home I still felt like a single child half the time. My younger brother was adopted from Korea when he was one, and has severe Autism. He self-abused, had physical outbursts, over-ate and needed constant supervision. After their divorce, my brother went to a facility and I stayed with my mother.

My father's second marriage brought my sister Crystal into the mix. Well, my step-sister and then adopted-sister. Five years younger than I, having a little sister was like having an alien living with me. And when her mother and "our" father divorced, Crystal stayed with her mom and led herself into a world of trouble. Now I call her my 'best friend'.

Our youngest brother Jay was born just a year before the divorce. The baby of the family, and spoiled brat he has become. Jay lived much of his early years going back and forth between his mother's and our father's. Before the end of elementary school he was with our father full-time, and remained there full-time.

When Linda came into the picture, she brought with her, her daughter Heather. Only a year younger than I, I consider Heather as much my sister as a full blood sister would be. At this point I had chosen to live with my father full-time. So between my father and step-mother, there were five children. If the Brady Bunch could keep it together, why shouldn't this work, right?

All coming from different backgrounds made life very interesting in the house. And Linda was probably the most interesting. She came from a hard working farm family, with little money. So Linda was and still is thrifty. If you consider saving everything from coffee cans, to broken items that "can be fixed" or turned into a craft project. Unfortunately you have to take the time to make the craft projects or fix the items. Otherwise you've initiated the process of hoarding by collecting random items.

As a teenager, Linda's "collecting" was the most common thing I remember. And when I cleaned I had often been reprimanded later for throwing something away that was going to "be used" for "something". But coming from a family of partially OCD relatives, and being an overly clean person myself it was frustrating to see "mess" of any kind. Linda doesn't recall the difference in the house while we were all still kids, verses now. Don't get me wrong, I'd argue plenty a time if doing the dishes or something they wanted done inconvenienced my plans. However I also remember plenty of times coming home and turning on the stereo system

to clean up the house. Whether in preparation for having friends over or just because things were getting messy I wanted it to look nicer.

I shall list the random items lying about the house or outside at certain points in time:

1. Fake finger nails . . . just one
2. House phones in the backyard on the swing . . . for days at a time . . . in the rain
3. Tupperware containers . . . with food still in them sitting on the porch . . . molding
4. Checks for thousands of dollars sitting in a box . . . from two plus years prior
5. Jewelry . . . random jewelry laying in miscellaneous places
6. Miscellaneous shoes . . .
7. Papers . . . papers everywhere . . . all the time

These are just a few things.

I remember being embarrassed of Linda for a long time. I was always so afraid of what she was going to say to my friends. Being a full-time mental health counselor she was always asking questions and giving advice. A trait I've clearly learned from her as my thirteen year old daughter likes to point out. On top of that, she was so ditzy! How can a person have so many "duh" moments I wondered? I rolled my eyes back then, but now know this is just who Linda is, and we have a good many laughs at her expense all in good fun. Had Linda been diagnosed with ADHD "way back when" she might have had an easier time of it. However had she been diagnosed, she wouldn't be the person she has become over the years.

Many a person has had frustrations with Linda over her abilities and lack of abilities in life. She's a compassionate person, who can be slightly overbearing. There are times when people might not always want her guidance and Linda has a hard time acknowledging that. Linda will come running in with help, and turn things into more chaos then they already are at times. Boundaries are a part of life that Linda doesn't really have. Whether that from her ADHD or just her upbringing, it can really bother people. My father comes from an overtly conservative family, while Linda's family is outspoken and rowdy. Quite a few times lines have been crossed between the families, causing disruption here and there.

It wasn't quite obvious to me when I first met Linda. Like I said, she was eclectic and helpful, and a little ditzy. Over time though, I was able to see just how ADHD Linda was. How many times did she forget things? How many times has she left something on top of a vehicle and driven away? How many times has she lost her keys or her cell phone? If you asked her I guarantee she couldn't tell you. Of course I have my favorite stories.

Driving . . . driving was one of my favorite things to do with Linda. How she can keep it together on the road is beyond me. I have to be thankful; if it weren't for Linda I would not know how to drive a manual transmission vehicle. Her little red Ford Focus brings many good memories to mind. At the same time, it brings terror to my mind. Running red lights, going the wrong way down one way roads, spilling coffee numerous times and being able to switch lanes without hitting anyone are just a few of the things we had to live through. Oddly enough it was the same one-way streets she would attempt to drive down frequently. And then there is the mess, another mess. Linda's car was like a giant filing cabinet. A filing cabinet filled with unnecessary, stained papers and some garbage. It was upsetting the few times Linda would take MY vehicle if hers was in the shop. I never knew the condition it would be in when it was returned to me. Granted I was a snotty teenager, but I was still cleaner than Linda's.

Vacations! Vacations were taken frequently with Linda. Thanks to Linda, I had many a good vacation. On another note, there was a good amount of stress in taking vacations with Linda as well. A type A personality person such as myself likes things planned, organized, and to be prepared. On vacation you never knew what was going to happen with Linda. While my father would be in the bathroom numerous times due to his nervous stomach, my step-mother would be working on last minute details while AT THE AIRPORT already or when CHECKING IN at the hotel. There were plenty of times where Linda didn't read between the lines, or follow the directions. After standing there talking to the attendant at the counter, or the front desk person . . . something was usually worked out. Whether it was because they felt bad for her or because they were annoyed by her talking to them it was handled. It wasn't until we were IN our hotel room that I was able to relax when we had four little children in tow. Of course the little children have come to understand Grandma Linda as well, and have learned to expect chaos and at times just a little uniqueness in any situation.

This brings me to the concept of being reprimanded. Linda has gotten herself into plenty of situations where again she is able to talk herself out of it due to misunderstandings and such. The typical blonde joke works well enough for Linda. “Sorry officer” The amount of tickets she has avoided due to her attention span is astounding. Then there is the reprimanding done by us; her family. Almost all of us have come to Linda more than once to discuss an issue. We frequently have to remind her about focusing on one thing at a time. This brings us to the holidays

Holidays . . . a time for celebrating God, and family and being thankful for what you have and what is. Always an interesting time in our family, for we never know what’s going to happen. Now that’s typical of most families in all honesty. What’s not is wondering whether the shirt your step-mother is wearing is supposed to be wide opening, displaying her entire back. Try having a demonstration of the latest “get rich quick” deal right before meal time; inviting the demonstrators for dinner. We finally put our foot down about using the phone during family functions. There are others who can deal with all the crises’ going on at their residential treatment facility for veterans.

Family functions are never without chaos though, and an occasional resident from their facility joining us for the day or evening. And while attempting to make meals with food on her hands, face, and clothes Linda will walk through the house to do ten other things. Redirection from one of us girls is usually involved. There are now fifteen of us between children and grandchildren, so it gets chaotic anyways without have an incredibly ADHD host. Our goal is usually to give Linda a task to do, while each of us focus on cleaning, cooking and keeping kids entertained. But I will give Linda credit where credit is due, because the last few family functions Linda attempts to get the house put together before we get there so it’s less chaotic when we arrive. Nothing like trying to keep a one year old away from the arts and crafts while trying to cook, wash dishes, and clean up whatever spilled on the floor.

The frustrations as a family member of someone so “out of it” are overwhelming though. For my father I can’t imagine the stress of marrying someone your complete opposite when it comes to life. His anal retentive, OCD behaviors have fallen behind over the years though and he does his best to support Linda, while attempting to take care of himself daily. His list of medical issues, followed by sixty one years of his “own-ness”, puts a damper on him actually really helping his spouse.

While Linda's daughter Heather knows her mother cannot help the way she is, it does hurt her at times to see her mother so off in her own world verses being her "mom". The way everyone views the normal mother daughter relationship is far from what Linda and Heather have. They ARE close, and Linda will drop anything if Heather called her for assistance of any kind. But having to remind your mother about her grandson's birthday party five minutes before it starts, gets old quickly. And knowing that at any point during the party she might be off in the other room discussing things about her latest idea for their treatment facility is annoying. The focus in Linda's life is always going in ten different directions, and Heather has to pry her mother away to get that focus on her.

My sister Crystal, Linda's step-daughter has a semi-decent relationship with Linda. And can understand some of the things Linda goes through. Having ADD herself, Crystal knows the feeling of going from one thing to the next. However she finishes every project she starts. Crystal initially led herself into a path of destruction starting in middle school. Linda's intervention is still yet to be determined whether it was helpful or not to send her off to treatment facilities, foster homes and mental hospitals. It's a guarantee that resentments still lie there. However the positive influences Linda has in Crystal and her children's life do counter affect the feelings to a point. Today Crystal is a "find outstanding citizen" with two beautiful children and an amazing fiancé.

Our youngest sibling Jay will be their most difficult child. A super senior having had issues in and out of school has ADD himself. Linda has done her best over the years to parent Jay, as she and our father are the primary care takers. However, Jay being the "baby" in the family and the one boy without severe disabilities has put him on our father's radar as being allowed to do whatever he wants. I've said it a million times you'd think after his fourth teenager he'd have it together. As stated before though, he has his own issues. Parenting wasn't ever really his forte and Linda does the best to her ability.

And I myself am just thankful for Linda. We ALL are. For one, without her I don't know that any of us would have made it through. That in itself is enough said. I've accepted who Linda is and I enjoy the entertainment she provides. My favorite memory from high school involving Linda was at my fifteenth or sixteenth birthday party. She collaborated with my best friend, and we had some friends over. Linda was responsible for making the cake. She did a wonderful job. Just before

blowing out the candles Linda announced that if anyone was allergic to cough syrup not to eat the red “frosting” on the cake. She has run out of food coloring and it was the closest thing she could find. I’ve since informed her that using cough syrup isn’t optional for a cake. However she makes the best peanut butter frosting in the world.

Linda as a whole is an amazing, spastic, fun person. She is capable of helping someone through a life crisis while at the same time sending another person into a maddening frenzy of frustration. She upsets people by inserting her foot into her mouth . . . down her throat . . . and through her digestive system. However her supportive comforting words can enlighten you at the same time. There isn’t a day that goes by that I can’t say I am thankful for having her in my and my family’s life.

Though this was really hard to hear I just had to put it in here because Mandi and Heather have both chosen to find the positive and look at what the good is as well as learning how to cope with the bad. We all have things that aren’t helpful to our children, our spouses, our employers but if we just keep learning, and keep seeking, and keep praying, and keep listening we can do what we were meant to do for all of them.

Well my time is up and I haven’t proofed the last 10 pages very well so hope it all makes sense. I will be looking forward to hearing from my readers and I will REALLY be looking forward to some invitations for speaking and anything else you can find on my web page I could do for you.