

Ensemble

My Happiness

Wake up and enjoy every day.
See my son grow up.
Live with my family.
Laugh with my friends.
Go to church and talk to God.
Have faith, love, and hope.
Breathe, feel, see, and hear.
Dream and smile.
Dance and sing.
Enjoy a good meal.
Be alive.

Happiness is all the people, details, things,
and moments that make us smile.
What makes you happy?

~ Pamela Hernandez

This Lady

I remember the first day
We were introduced ...
She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen
No taller than 5' 3", brown skinned, hair down to her shoulders
She was much older than me
But that didn't change how we felt about each other
I didn't have anything to give
Nor could I do much for her
But she smiled and smiled at me like
I was the best thing that happened to her ...
She took me to her home
 fed me and let me sleep in her warm bed
 and use her big tub
 and bought me nice clothes
I didn't know what love was 'til
I was invaded with her love ...
This lady is very rare
 and like her I have found no other
I will never find another lady like this –
 like my mother.

~ Dwalyn Green

The Day We Tried to Burn Our Sister

I remember one summer back when I was around eight years old. I was at my grandparents' house in West Virginia with my two older sisters.

I am the youngest of three girls, but I was a tomboy growing up. Sue was the oldest, then Ethel is in between us. Sue and I were always picking on Ethel. She was always whining about some things we did. So we picked on her a lot. Some times we were mean about it; other times we were not.

One summer, we all decided to pretend to be cowboys and Indians. I'm not for sure who was who now. But Sue and I had talked Ethel into going in the house to get some kitchen matches. While in there, we found a rope. When Ethel came out, we got hold of her and tied her up to a big tree in the back yard. Then we put branches and twigs around her. I'm not sure who lit the matches, but we lit the wood around Ethel. Ethel kept screaming for Grandma.

Grandma came out of the house to see what was going on. Sue and I knew we were in big trouble. I'm not sure what happened next because I was too busy climbing that tree that we tied Ethel to.

Sue ended up getting into more trouble than I, because she was the oldest and knew better. When I finally came down out of the tree, Grandma gave me a tongue lashing. I would rather we had a whipping because Grandma's tongue was sharper than a whipping.

We are all grown now with our own children and grandchildren. But when we get together with our family, somebody always brings up the day Sue and I tied Ethel to the tree and tried to set her on fire.

~ Jackie Colflesh

What You Are to Me

Uncle and Aunt
What you are to me
Inspirers of life in a positive light
Teardrops of memories that once saved my life
Teachers of lessons I needed to know
Pieces of yourselves given to help me grow
Smiles from your hearts and love from your souls
You are more to me than I could ever show
Than you will ever know
A silver lining that tugs at my heart
To let me know that you are there, always.

~ Toni Garcia

How I Came to Own a Dog

If there was one thing my husband and I totally agreed on, it was that we would never have a house pet, other than a fish. We were convinced that it would be more trouble than good. After having Rusty (my niece's dog) at our house for about a month and potty training him, we were definitely convinced that we didn't need a pet. But gradually it all changed, and we got attached to the pup.

It all started with my niece, Brooklyn's 6th birthday. All she wanted was a miniature poodle. Her mom would try to suggest other things to her, but Brooklyn insisted that the only thing that would make her birthday perfect was a miniature poodle. Finally my sister and her husband could not resist it any longer and decided to get her one. The problem was that when they found just the right one, it was still a month until her birthday. So my sister asked me if we would be interested in keeping him until her daughter's birthday. The only problem, she told me, was that he was only about 4 months old, and he wasn't potty trained at all. Although I had some misgivings about it, I told myself, it can't be that bad. After all it would only be for a month. So I conferred with my husband, and after some discussion, we decided to do it.

When Rusty moved in with us, we had to make some changes in our lifestyle. We had to adjust our schedules so we could take him outside to go potty every three hours. During the night he had to hold it for eight hours. At first his messes were pretty bad; we had to clean up after him almost every day. And he chewed on things, so we had to be careful about what we left out for him to discover. However, towards the end of his stay things were starting to look better. We only had to clean up messes about two times a week, and it was rather nice to have a dog to take along on walks and to throw a toy with.

Then came the long awaited day, Brooklyn's birthday. My brother-in-law took Rusty for his first haircut two days before her birthday, so he was looking as cute as a doll (although we didn't

tell him for the sake of his ego), and we were actually pretty sad to see him go. Brooklyn was happy with her puppy for about two months, but like most kids, she hadn't counted the cost of time and energy spent on taking care of a puppy. So she asked her mom and dad if she could have a scooter instead. Brooklyn's parents travel a lot, so they were getting tired of finding sitters for Rusty all the time. On top of that, they were expecting a baby, so they agreed.

Now they had to find a home for him. I guess my husband and I were the first ones they thought of since we had taken care of him when they first got him. When they first asked us if we wanted him, we said no because we remembered our decision never to have house pets (not to mention the remembrance of peed-on carpets). But we couldn't get Rusty off our minds, and we remembered how much fun we had with him the last week he was at our house. So after reconsidering, we finally called them back and said we wanted him after all, hoping they hadn't found a home for him in the meantime. They said no, they still had him, and we could come get him anytime. So we went over and picked him up that same day.

While it definitely hasn't all been a stroll in the park to have a dog, we have had a lot of fun with Rusty. There is just something nice about coming home to something that is absolutely excited to see me, no matter how late I was out. I guess for me that's the best part of having a dog. They don't get mad at you, and you can tell them anything you want to, as long as you say it in a nice voice they will wag their tails and tell you they love you with their soft puppy dog eyes.

~Viola Hershberger

A Sweater from My Father

My father gave me a sweater when I was in high school. I have kept it as my valuable possession for about ten years. It is neither a birthday present nor a reward for my good performance. However, it represents my father's love, which warms my heart especially on my hard times.

I remember clearly that it was a cold winter morning. I was doing morning exercises in the playground when my father came with a new sweater. It was a milky white woolen sweater with beautiful dark colored strips. He handed it to me and just asked me to try it on. We didn't talk much before he left for his busy work. It was a special moment in my life. Whenever I see that sweater, I can still picture the view of my father's back when he was leaving. It was such a simple sweater. However, I could feel my father's silent but warm love. That might be what he should do as a father, but I saw it as a treasure he gave me in my life.

I still keep it even though it becomes old and will never fit me any more. As the years roll on, my father aged, and I grew up as a man. Sometimes I imagine a scene – I get married and have my child. What gift shall I give him or her? I am not sure. But I'll definitely tell him or her the story of the old sweater from my father.

~ Lan Kun Guo

Family

Family
Love, Strength
Uplifting, Nurturing, Empowering
Diverse yet Unified, Competitive yet Caring
Struggling, Arguing, Criticizing
Priceless, Irreplaceable
Forever

*~ Live Oaks Group Project:
Isha Cham
Zambia Sherland
Michaela Thomas
Janeth Urgilez*

You're Not Here

You're out of my eyesight,
out of my vision,
but when I look in the mirror,
I see a reflection of you looking back at me.
You're me 23 years ago.

You're out of my home,
out of my life,
but memories of you live in my heart,
and when I see my shadow on a sunny day,
I see an image of your hopes and dreams.

You're out of my reach,
out of my touch,
but when I close my eyes,
I can remember all the hugs and kisses
I gave you for seventeen years,
and these I will cherish always.
They will carry me through the rough times.

You're out of my voice of reason,
out of my hearing,
not that you would listen anyway,
but when I watch the sunset,
I feel closest to you.
I can feel your love so deep and pure.
You're confused,
but I know our love will always stand.

~ Karen Flick

My Precious Grandson

This is a story about my grandson. When my daughter was eighteen and still in high school, she said that she was pregnant. Well, I was quite upset, but I got over it. Then came little Landyn. He had to be the most precious little guy that I had ever seen. One reason he is so precious is because he looks like my little brother who died when I was three years old. He was only about two years old, and I have to believe that God needed him in heaven then.

He and my daughter live with me and Grandma. He is five now, and he is what keeps me going in the summer. We go fishing and play outside. He also loves to go down to Williamsburg, Kentucky; that's where our cousins and family live. They have a skating rink, and he loves to skate. He never gets tired.

When I was working, I couldn't wait to hit the door so I could rush home to see him. When he gets sick, I feel his pain. When he gets his picture taken, I can't wait to take them to work to show them to everybody. I am so proud of him. I thank God for him, and I can see why God loves us so much. We are his children.

He is also why I need to get my GED so I can get a better job; that way my family and I can have a better future and spend more time enjoying life together.

~ Steve Baird

Bedtime Story

A dedication to my son Garrett

When you were little I could not read and write. I could not read you a bedtime story. Now that I have been tutored, I can. Let me tell you this story about your life.

When you were born your mother and I were so delighted to have a son. I think about the times you and your mother sat on the grass, and the grass tickled your legs and made you laugh. I laughed with you.

And then along came your brother – a little brother to love and fight with. I know that is the way it is, having a brother of my own.

Your mother got sick with cancer. Years later she had your little sister. But before your sister could grow up we lost your mother. Your sister was only 1½ years old. Our world fell apart.

And a few years later we lost you, but not before you had gotten married and had a little girl on the way. Just two weeks prior to your daughter's birth you passed away. Her name is Adriane.

I love you and your mother. I miss you and all the joy you brought into my life: building cars, racing motorcycles, and hunting deer together. I remember when you shot at a deer and you swore that you had hit it! You didn't know that I had loaded your gun with blanks. It was your first time hunting. I thought it was funny. You sat and took your gun apart to check to see if your gun was clogged.

As I'm reminiscing about these joyful times, I'm getting choked up. I will say goodnight, my first born, goodnight.

January 2010

~ Ronald Fugate

Milkyas

Matt and Million are his brothers.
Ice cream is his favorite food.
Likes playing golf,
Keba is his friend.
Yesterday he went to school.
A good student –
Student of the month.

~ *Birkita Tesfageris*

Thurlbredz

On September 6, 1985 an amazing baby was born into the world by the name of Reginald Eggleton. Reginald wasn't exactly what you would call a normal baby. He was moved by music. Reginald was usually a lazy baby. His mother had to place pillows around him to hold him up, otherwise he would flop over. It seemed like the only time Reginald would be active was when music was on. Then he would bounce, clap his hands, and babble as if he knew what he was saying.

By the time he reached the age of seven, he started to put his words together magnificently. He was part of a really enormous family. His mother would throw parties every other weekend so the family could get together and have fun. Reginald would put on a show for his family, dancing and rhyming words together. His father always said he would be a rapper.

By the time Reginald turned 15, it was apparent he was an artist. He signed a contract to be part of Marco Records. His older brother, his cousin, and he had started a rap group called Thurlbredz. After only a week of being on the label, they recorded their first song on a CD. A month later the Thurlbredz threw a hip hop concert which was over-crowded with family and friends. The show was very successful. They quickly became very popular.

No one expected for Reginald to be the very successful artist he is. His mother knew from the time he was born that he was a baby with a gift. A gift that she hoped would pay off one day. She always told Reginald to follow his dream and that is exactly what Reginald is doing.

~ Reginald Eggleton

