

Introduction

Throughout my life, I've experienced interesting situations and met some unique people like most of you, I'm sure. I want to share some of the stories and lessons I've learned beginning with this introductory free e-book.

I've always been interested in people's life stories, various scenarios observing my own life, and how different we respond. I've found comfort in listening to personal stories and talking about them. It seems to connect us somehow. We all have similar circumstances and situations but react a hundred different ways. Have you ever wondered about that?

I don't think there is necessarily a wrong or right way – just a perceived way. In my stories, I like to present situations I've experienced or observed to see if it sparks something you've seen or a memory you have. And, there you go, we've make a connection.

I have always believed, if we could find common ground and talk, anything is possible and most of our problems with one another or life issues could be resolved or, at the very least, considered.

"...when there is true surrender and service between people, the roles of helper and helped, and the boundaries between those in power and those who are powerless, begin to dissolve."

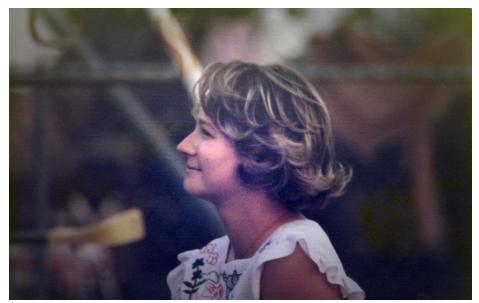
~~ Ram Dass — "Still Here"!

The key is finding common ground, telling stories and connecting. It is my hope through reading these stories it will take you to a similar place or memory, warm your heart, encourage you to make changes, if you need to, or just let the conversation begin.

The following are 6 stories – some are freshly written and others are taken from the archives of my site <u>Plain Talk and Ordinary Wisdom</u> (post date will be included if from my site).



Crafting My Story (November 13, 2012)



Personal Photo - Copyright by Pat Ruppel

Who I Am

It's autumn and an icy rain has just fallen.

You can see the breath of a 7-year old girl huddled in the dark, cold streets of an East coast suburban neighborhood with an ice pick in her hands about to flatten some tires.

Her mother crazed with jealousy sent her

on this mission in an attempt to falter an imaginary affair between her dad and a neighbor.

Let's fast forward to a warm, balmy day in a small, southern beach town where this girl reunites with her grandmother, grandfather, sister and cousins for their annual vacation.

Summer excursions with Grandmom, ghost stories and simple love and truths accepting her for who she is are the saving grace and essence of who she wants to become. This is where I find myself – this is where I am loved.

What I Do

There are many tales to tell that got me from that suburban street to where I now live in Colorado and it started with writing these stories and what I've learned to become. It gets more interesting, as daily life ebbs and flows. Days, months, years pass and intriguing family characters emerge as stories of my life unfold.

I write about the magic of love, forgiveness, despair, faith and the supernatural. I write to find understanding and wholeness in my life from what I see as a mixed-up world yearning to connect with one another and find meaning.

The more I tell these stories the more I realize how unique they are in the telling yet not unlike a similar story someone else would tell in trying to make sense of it all.

Why I Do What I Do

I want to connect with others, touch a place in their heart and help them feel loved. I want to help them find who they are by telling stories and give them hope as my grandmother did for me many years ago. Some of the stories may make you laugh when I tell of my "fruitcake moments". Or they may be similar to yours in the telling of an imaginary friend, mother's jealousy, 3 rabbits, rooster named Goldie or grandmother's backyard connection to a funeral home to name several.

In the crafting of my story, I hope it gives a little insight to who I am and together in some small way maybe we can make the world a better place for having just lived to pass along our life's tales.



Sweet Days of Summer – All is Okay

I've had this strong feeling today that "all is okay". This strength and peace I've felt in the mist of seeming chaos I can't explain. Maybe some of you reading understand what I'm trying to say.

As this 2012 summer winds down, I find myself winding down too from a rough 12 months of Colorado fires, a theater shooting monstrosity and personal challenges. I sit here with my laptop at the dining room table and reflect. There have been many miracles this year and I wonder at the perfection of things - beautiful people I've met. I remember deeply how I was touched when life got difficult and I didn't understand – but there was inner strength and guidance, support and love from family, friends and professional expertise.

I hear the summer sounds outside, smell the cool, night air and flash back to my innocent childhood days at my grandparents' home when life seemed simpler. I remember feeling so safe and all I wanted to do was play. I was in heaven as long as I could be at Grandmom and Grandpop's. That's when I really felt, with my entire little being, "all WAS okay".



Grandmom and Grandpop – Personal Family Photo

As I look back, I guess you could say our summer stays with our grandparents were unique - 5 cousins, sister, Grandmom, Grandpop and me. The moment school let out every year we all headed south to a small, beach town in Cape Charles, VA. It was the kind of town that had a big water tower at its entrance making the announcement that you are here - CAPE CHARLES.

When I was young, play was simple – no toys except for an occasional tray of watercolors, paint brush and marbles. The rest was left to our imagination and, "boy, did we imagine" with a little nudging from Grandmom.

If we even hinted we were bored, she'd take us for a walk looking for rocks to bring home and paint so she could use them for doorstops all over the house. We'd play in the backyard pretending we were in a circus. I would walk a tight rope on the ground on a wooden ladder or take a clothes-line pole and pole vault.

One time, we were all given some chocolate pudding and took it out in the backyard where we were playing. I remember setting it down temporarily on the stoop while I ran off to do something with my cousins and came back to finish eating it. As I looked down to eat my last bite, I realized I had just gulped down a bunch of chocolate ants and tried to 'hack' them up to no avail. I imagined feeling little 'wiggly things' in my stomach for a while.

In the hot, summer evenings, we'd sit on the front porch and my grandparents watched as we caught lightening bugs, played "kicked the can" or "red light-green light". No fretting as to what to do or where to go – just passing time with each other.

Occasionally, someone walking to town would stop and chat with us on the porch and pass along the latest news. We could stand at the end of our sidewalk, look up the street about 3 blocks and see the lights of town including the movie theater. A couple blocks beyond was the beach front lined with big, southern-style pillar houses, a boardwalk and pavillion.

Across the street was a big, open field with a railroad track and woods beyond. I got used to the sound all day and night of the box cars being moved back and forth by a lone, railroad engineer and his crew. It was the chug of the engine, hollow sounds of the cars in tow, creaking, and the echo down the line of tracks, as they bumped against each other to be hooked up.

Just a small town with normal people coming and going about their business of the day and settling in with family at night. There are so many more stories to tell of those yearly, summer days, as I sit and reflect. It warms my heart.

And, as I ponder this strong feeling of peace and strength, I can hear the distant sound of Grandmom calling to us, "whooooeeeee", from a back room in the house, as we enter the front door announcing we were home.

Yes, "all is STILL okay" whether on this side or the other where crossed-over loved ones reside. No matter what life looks like at this stage, even in the midst of turmoil, nothing is lost, if we imagine, attempt to look at the bigger picture and know there is more going on here.



Entertaining Angels Unawares (December 13, 2007)

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (The Holy Bible KJV- Hebrews 13:2)



Angel Photo - by Jim Ruppel

There is a beautiful little publication called Angels on Earth. It's a collection of stories from people all over the world that have had life-changing experiences entertaining strangers – angels.

Have you had a situation in your life when you were in great need and someone showed up at the right time and place to help? I have and I thought I would share this story with you, especially during the holiday season.

It was over 30 years ago and a friend of mine and I went to the grocery store. At the time, our children were small. I had my baby, Stephanie, and my 2-year old, Allison, with us and after walking in the store we pulled out a grocery cart.

I put Allison in the empty cart facing forward, with her legs through the top, and holding Stephanie we headed out to start shopping. My friend and I stopped

at the end of one of the aisles to look at a spiral book rack – still without groceries.

As we looked at the books, Allison got restless in the cart and started to climb out. I didn't notice but in that split second someone else did. Because the cart was empty, it started to lift up and turn over end, as she tried to climb out. A young man ran in between me and the cart and caught her just 2 inches from the concrete floor. He was also with a child in his grocery cart. I never saw him before she was caught.

It all happened so fast with her only inches from me. He set her down on her feet and released her to me *never saying a word*. Our eyes met and I felt a deep, warm and penetrating look, as if our souls knew each other.

As I recovered and checked on Allison to be sure she was okay, I looked up, still shaken, to thank him but he was gone. We hurried through the store to catch him to express our heartfelt gratitude but he was nowhere to be found.

That day, I met Allison's angel and she jokes that she keeps him busy but we know he'll always be there looking out for her with love and compassion.

Angels are there in all forms whether it's a young man with a little boy, an animal or bird. God, Higher Power, or whatever name you give, is always there in many forms and it's comforting. Be on the lookout. You never know when you will have entertained a stranger – your angel.



What's Wrong With This Picture?



Photo by Jim Ruppel – beer bottle on old roof outside of Madrid, NM

Do you see anything wrong with this picture? The beer bottle in this old roof doesn't fit with its environment. To me, it stands out and seems arrogant in context.

I suppose that's the purpose in putting it there – to make a statement, "I was here!" But, as I look around at other things humans leave a stamp on, I wonder if we're trying to say something or just don't notice or care.

For myself, which only I can be accountable, I ask, "Why is it I notice some things and not others?"

My husband, who seems to notice most things and remember 'everything' says, "We don't

notice or listen because it's not important to us – it takes practice." I don't intend to be oblivious and my heart says I want to care. But, if I really think about it, I suppose there is truth in what he says though it's hard to hear, when spoken out loud.

We have so much information thrust at us every day, no less a given moment, to process and discard – process and discard – like robots. Are we becoming more like machines turning on in the morning and switching off at night with not much feeling or compassion? Except when an interruption occurs – like red lights and a siren or the boss wanting to see you in his office – then the fog clears and we take notice.

I don't claim to be a skillfully, aware person noticing everything going on around me. In fact, I've had so many 'ditzy' moments you'd think I was blonde – I now call them 'senior moments'.

An example of one 'ditzy' moment years ago was, when I had my daughters with me in this big, orange van, trying to find a place to park in downtown Denver. I don't remember the occasion or where we were going but *I do remember the parking garage*.

We pulled in and stopped at the bar hanging on a chain giving the vehicle height restriction. I looked out the front window and up at the bar and thought I had enough clearance and proceeded forward forgetting to notice the vent we added on top.

Once you're in – you're committed and shortly after I soon realized my <u>BIG</u> mistake after I passed under the first overhead-concrete fixture – *shhhhh*! I was stuck and there were more *shhhhhh*'s, as I passed in and out the fixtures, through the garage to find the exit and get out of there. Bad judgment and wrong decision not to mention how I was going to explain this to my husband!

Now, as I look back, I can laugh at this 'ditzy' moment and yet there are perhaps a lot more times I did take notice, especially when something was out of place. In fact, people at work used to say I noticed everything – if they only knew.

Are we becoming a culture with our bodies going through the motions but our heads and hearts stuck in the sand (that's an interesting picture)? Do we only measure importance by the next text or the daily e-mails while so much *life* is going on around us?

Years ago, I was giving a workshop and was curious about a particular reaction. It occurred to me before anyone came in while I was setting up. I dropped some papers on the floor and picked them up but thought, "What would be the response if there was paper all over the floor?" "Would anyone notice and pick them up or not notice at all?" So, I crumpled up wads of paper and scattered them where everyone walked and sat.

What do you think happened? I guess I was surprised that no one noticed and some even stepped over the wads of paper on the floor. I mentioned it to the group what I had done but with still very little reaction or discussion – no big deal I guess.

I forgot about it and went on with the workshop until now, with curiosity, again wondering what it takes for us to just pay attention, plug in and care about what is going on around us. Important things: people, nature, sky, sounds, smells, *life* – and I don't mean sending a text or listening to iTunes.

What counts to you? What is important enough to take notice and pay attention and more importantly how do we respond? Dr. Wayne Dyer once said:

"It is said that when a butterfly flaps its wings, that energy flows thousands of miles away. And a silent blessing or thought of love toward others contains a vibration that will be felt throughout the cosmos." 2

What we think and do matters when we notice, if only through the slightest touch, a breath or glimpse. But more importantly, when what we notice is connected to the heart, energy is created and vibration is sent forth.

I'll join you in making a more conscious effort in taking notice, paying attention and acting on it. It will matter to the world around us, if we really care and do something about it.



Family and Going Home (December 7, 2007)



Photo by Pat - Papa and Grandsons

Starting tonight we get our grandsons for the weekend. I'm reminded how precious family is, especially this time of the year.

My husband and I love having them come and spend time with us. They're growing up fast, like in the song "Turn Around", and it won't be long when they'll have places to go and things to do with their friends.

Yes, we get caught up in the frenzy of job, errands, answering

e-mails, etc. But *more than once a year*, particularly at Christmas, it's important to play – wrestle, take long walks, make snowmen, talk, read stories, watch movies – and not let a minute go by without cherishing the gift of family. Whatever your family looks like, whether with children or not, it's valuable to you and is important.

I grew up spending the whole summer, every summer, with my sister and 5 cousins at my grandparents. We were always excited to get there and cried when it came time to leave.

There was nothing special to do at my grandparents. They didn't have toys and never took us to a movie. We just hung around every day and played together and were part of their everyday life. I think that is what made it special. We belonged and were valued and safe.

They took us fishing and crabbing and we went to the cemetery with them to cut the grass around the family tombstones. They interacted with us in their regular daily living. We visited like that with them every year until I graduated from high school.

Occasionally on weekends, our parents would come to visit – some as far as 250 miles. Because it was a long ride just for the weekend, they would leave after work on Friday and drive the distance. We'd be in bed and hear them come in before dawn, 2:00 or 3:00 am, and Grandmom would put on a pot coffee. She would fix them something to eat to give them a chance to unwind from their long trip before going to bed.

We'd lie in bed catching the aromas of food drifting upstairs and listen to the quiet, hushed sounds of laughter and talk. It's been over 40 years now since my grandparents have died – I still miss them.

I can still hear them in the lonely, lit room downstairs, talking and sitting around the kitchen table with all of us nestled upstairs in our warm beds. In fact, that's where I got the idea of kitchen table stories on my site.

How do we create those memories for our children, our families? The answer: time and giving of ourselves. How did we get so busy that we barely have time for supper, a few words and homework, before it's time for bed and the next morning it starts all over again? Before you know a year has flown by, then 5 years, high school and on, and on, and on.

How do I take control of my life? As the saying goes, "Just do it!" If you don't make a conscious decision to live the life you want, it will be done for you. Life just happens.

As we approach this special time of the year, become aware of your routines and demands and decide to change, if it no longer fits. Love more, live more, laugh more and make those special memories starting this very moment with your family – your loved ones.

Here is a little something from Erma Bombeck, writer and humorist, <u>If I Had My Life to Live</u> Over (written after she found out she was dying from cancer).



Sleepless in Bailey

It's around 3:00 am and I'm wide awake. I'm not in Seattle (as in the popular movie) or restless nor troubled – just up and conscious.

Lately, I don't go to bed until 1:00 or 2:00 am and now I'm *waking up* at strange hours.

This time in the wee hours of the morning is so still and quiet.

I remember the silence took some getting used to when we first moved to the mountains over 30 years ago. Sounds silly but the silence was loud and uncomfortable. It was void of what I had been accustomed to – sirens, traffic and noise of the city.

Now, at this time of the hour, if I go out on my deck, I can almost hear the neighbors slumber. I hear an occasional dog barking but it is mostly silent. In the calmness of the night, the sky seems heavy and draws close, opening up with stars shimmering as if to beckon, "Come play".



Photo by Pat Ruppel

It makes me wonder: they say this is the hour when the conscious world and the world beyond meet and, if you listen close enough, you can hear angels speak. I also believe it's a time when we're most willing to listen to our spirits and glean wisdom we would otherwise not hear in the hustle and bustle of the day.

The thoughts and wisdom that come are not booming or earth shattering but soft and subtle – easily missed, if not attentive. It's interesting in writing this story the words are not flowing but come in spurts – a phrase at a time.

I may not understand the purpose or pattern of this new chapter in my life but know it will all eventually connect and I'll be able to use this experience in the grander scheme.

I take another glance at the clock.



END NOTES

- <u>1</u>. (<u>Introduction</u> quote): "Shifting Roles", from STILL HERE by Ram Dass, © 2000 by Ram Dass. Used by permission of Riverhead Books, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.
- 2. (What's Wrong With This Picture? quote): Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, "Change Your Thoughts − Change Your Life: Living the Wisdom of the Tao", © 2007, Used by permission of Hay House Inc., Carlsbad, CA





About the Author ■ ■ ■ ■



Pat, Abby and Riley - November 2012

Pat (Collingwood) Ruppel was born in Delaware, raised in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA and spent her summers with grandparents in Cape Charles, VA.

In 1969, she and her husband moved halfway across the country to make their new home in the Colorado Rockies and start a family.

Over the years, she held various corporate jobs. While employed in one of those positions, in early 2000, Pat created and piloted a 4-part talking-stick workshop called "Wisdom for the Ages" for coworkers and management.

Pat served as Treasurer for BHS (Business Honoring Spirituality), Newsletter Editor at Mile High Sales Professionals and workshop facilitator at CWEE (Center for Work, Education and Employment).

She has also volunteered with the assembling of newsletters and rocking babies at Bridgeway, as well as facilitating weekly talking-stick workshops at Morningstar Assisted Living Center.

Having raised two lovely daughters, now with families of their own, Pat is still capturing the moments. She started writing in 2007, recently retired from corporate and is now home recording her stories in e-books and writing for her <u>current site</u>.

THE END

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My new 2013 project is a second e-book with much more content. I'm looking forward to sharing many more personal stories, reflections and life lessons with you.