

TWO PLUS

All stories have three parts, don't they? There's a beginning, where people, places, or circumstances are introduced and serve as a start for what comes next, or to explain perhaps why something happens. Next is the middle where all of the foregoing are explained or reviewed, conflicts or actions are described, and goals described. Thereafter comes the end, where resolutions are described and the story is over. But in a story, there is really never an end. There is an end to an event, but a story goes on, its characters live another day, or the place serves as a location for others and their experiences, or the readers are influenced to act or at least respond to the story and carry on afterwards, either simply learning about something or choosing a course of action they would not have, absent the message they received.

The story that will follow may seem that it has a beginning that is slow to develop or unusual, or maybe just ordinary and unremarkable, but it will serve to explain what follows. This story's middle has several parts, but are related and detail some of the occurrences and characters intertwined in their lives and actions.

Finally the end, and it is hoped that while events do have ends, you will agree that this is a story, and life goes on and some of that will also continue here, and maybe even present a lesson or a goal or information of value to this audience. We shall see.

Now on to the beginning. It starts with two. Two, is the number of great grandmothers, that I knew and knew about. There were the requisite number of grandmothers (two) and grandfathers (two again), and a mother and father. There were also my dad's sister (and her husband) and my mother's brother and two sisters (and matching aunt and two more uncles). And there was a boy and girl cousin courtesy of my dad, and a boy cousin from my mother's older sister, and then me plus a brother and a sister to come and 14 additional cousins to be added. We all lived in a small relatively isolated community, so remote it was barely intruded upon even by television, as the only broadcasting station was a state away and unlike today or even then in large cities, mostly off the air. While we had phones, party lines were the rule and ours was shared with two other houses, and we children were warned only to answer "our" ring, and if we heard voices on the line when we picked up our receiver to place a call, proper etiquette required that we to put it back and not dare listen to our neighbors' conversations. Long distance was an extravagance in those days of 3 cent first class postage stamps, and besides mostly unnecessary, for all of those relatives on my mother's side of the family as our property line was adjacent to the houses of two cousins' houses and then the third family of cousins and our grandparents' houses were adjacent to theirs, all courtesy of our Grandfather Babcock, who had bought 70 acres at the northern edge of our little town. Scattered along our street were families of our parents' friends who had bought lots from our

grandfather and who might have well as been real aunts and uncles, with all of the proprietary interest and attention they freely dispensed, including of course any discipline they felt was immediately needed, which was in no way limited to verbal warnings, and in fact would have landed them in front of a police magistrate in the present day, but I am digressing since I was mostly perfect or at least fast running in those days.

The grade school which all of us attended was about three or four blocks away which was half way to my other cousins, with my other grandparents about that same distance the other direction. There was a local newspaper, and a couple of radio stations and WLW radio at night to listen to Reds games, and one high school for the town, which pretty much circumscribed this isolated life. It was just plain simple really, with English (if you count Wales and Scotland) and some German genes and Presbyterian and Methodist churches the choice, and everybody attending the same local schools to keep everything pretty much the same. In fact, our family being Episcopalians, was a little outré compared to the Methodist and Presbyterian rest of the family, which may not seem at all unusual in keeping with the thoughts and inclinations of our Literary Club compatriot Father Fred McGavern.

It was expected that for the most part we would study hard, mind our parents, do our best, hold jobs and work at what we could do, respect our elders, keep our rooms clean, make our beds, brush our teeth, be patriotic, say our prayers, and when we

grew up, vote Republican. On this latter point, my maternal grandfather, who had developed our neighborhood before any of us knew what that was, outsourced the grinding of lenses for his optometry practice by hiring technicians from Germany, and my paternal grandfather who had come up through the ranks to run the local steel mill, both left no doubt about the appropriate sentiments toward labor unions. So all of those old fashioned traditions of hard work, industry and rule-following came down from both sides of the family. It involved doing your best in school, participating in your community and making something of yourself. In addition to weekly attendance at church, there were youth groups to provided further training, service as an acolyte and yet another weekly church service, Boy Scouts—my brother and I and at least my older male cousins were all Eagle Scouts, and DeMolay members, the Masonic organization for boys, as well as members of the clubs at the local high school to instill the virtues of service, and community participation and obligation. This was just how life was in that small insular town.

Now about those missing great grandparents, two complete sets, one from each side of my family, and the husbands of the two great grandmothers from each maternal side—there was apparently nothing to tell. I probably was aware that they had to exist, but I never thought about them, and do not recall having heard their names, or where they had lived or what they had done, or when they might have done that, or when they ceased all of the foregoing. At some early point, my mother stopped

taking me to visit her grandmother and deliver some grocery items after we had taken our weekly trip to the grocery store, and that was it. Over and done with. As far as my other great grandmother, my contact was longer lasting but no more informative. She was born at the end of the Civil War, lived to the age of 106 and was a regular baby sitter and used to entertain me and allow me to listen to Reds games on WLW some nights while she acted in response to the sponsor of those games and imbibed in several Burger beers and allowed me Seven-Up and vanilla ice cream floats.

The first time I became personally aware that death intruded upon this rather small circle of life was an Easter dinner at my dad's parents' house when my grandfather suffered a stroke and was taken from his bed by paramedics to the hospital, and the next morning or a day later, my dad told my brother and me that we did not have to go to school if we didn't want to, which puzzled us both since we always had to go to school. When we both asked why we didn't have to go to school, we were told it was because Grandpa had died. We remained puzzled while walking to school and that was the last we heard of the issue. By the time I was through with grade school, my maternal grandmother contracted breast cancer and within about 3 months had died, and my brother and several of the older cousins (along with the grown-ups of course) did attend our first funeral and burial service for her, which was for me the first time sorrow and death had intruded upon that family experience we were all living. Grandmother Babcock had been very much in our lives, fixing family dinners

and deserts, showing the girls how to operate a sewing machine, and ironing machinery, preserving fruits and vegetables, and other “girl” jobs, and always being present and grandmotherly. There was sadness and sorrow, but not much talking about any of it or what meaning or implications were there, and there was certainly no dwelling on her death. Such tragedies seemingly occurred only in a natural order.

I was off at college in the east when I got one of those never occurring long distance phone calls on the dorm phone one Sunday and my parents told me that my other grandfather had been out working his property and had had a heart attack, and had died. I was distraught and asked when the funeral would be held and was told it had already occurred and that it wouldn't have really been feasible for me to have come home for it, so they had waited until afterwards to tell me, as they realized I would have done or at least attempted the infeasible. By this time, I had figured out that despite the closely interwoven family, this method of not dealing with death was pretty unusual, and while I wasn't sure what, that I would try to do things differently.

For my own family, my bride had come from a big Irish Catholic family with a sister and four brothers, although her father had only two brothers, one of whom who had died without children, the other lived out of town and had only two daughters, but her mother was one of eight, all but one of whom lived in Cincinnati, and with 36 cousins in her generation. As for our own offspring, there were six, and five have thus far married and at last count here were an even dozen of my own grandchildren,

with at least one more on the way if Facebook postings are to be deemed credible these days.

My wife knew her grandparents, and while not knowing her great grandparents, the family knew who they were, had portraits and pictures of them, knew their names and what they did, when they came here, from where they had come and also those before them. There were siblings who died at birth, and the tragedy of her uncle's death, which had it not been for the impossibility to get penicillin from England during the Second World War, he would have lived. In short she was not as insulated as I had been from the normality of life and, consequently the end of life.

This is a story set up now for that eventuality. Life is never an upwardly linear picnic. It presents work and obstacles to overcome, and achievements and joy, with hardships and bumps along the way, and hopefully if the lessons of life and ways of living are properly addressed, things will work out. At least that's been the program for our country and the way I suspect all of those of us here tonight have been raised.

Of course, nothing in life is totally easy, and Teddy our oldest demonstrated that after being an only child for two years before his sister May arrived and two years later his sister Libby, that splitting the attention of your parents can have advantages, and being the oldest, helping with younger sisters and a brother, can distract their attention from what you are doing or not doing. Attending St. Xavier High School

in the family tradition, also presented an opportunity to escape constant oversight, with the result that a post graduate year in Maine at a boarding school, seemed like the best use of his next year and for Teddy it worked amazingly well. He had grown up physically as well as every other way, learning proper study habits and dealing with teachers and playing sports with success also, all leading to college at his first choice and performing well there and playing sports on his college teams, and following his successful college experience with a law degree followed by a post graduate law degree. After taking and passing the New York bar, it was off to Washington, DC to jobs on Congressional staffs and director of the DC office of an Arizona Congressman, and then to a position on the House Judiciary Committee staff during the Impeachment of President Clinton, and then a position as deputy Special Counsel Investigating Secretary Cisneros, all exciting stuff. Thereafter he entered private law practice, with ever larger law firms. He met Elizabeth, who was a television news reporter on location, and had escaped to DC from her Texas home and Missouri college days with a passel of friends, and loads of enthusiasm. What followed was a townhouse on Capitol Hill that needed lots of work, but came out well, and it was followed by a second above Georgetown, all pretty normal so far. As his generation went, Libby, our third child was the first to marry and started off this story with the first two grandchildren, daughters two years apart before Teddy and Elizabeth added their son to the mix and after another granddaughter to make 3

from Libby, Teddy and Elizabeth announced they were having their second child, and then delighted all with the news of twins. This was followed with more good news that it was a girl and a boy that we would all have to celebrate. Then the other shoe dropped.

Amniocentesis revealed that the little girl baby would be a problem. That was how it was described, a problem. She was likely to be born a Downs Syndrome child. They were in Washington, DC and we were in Cincinnati 500 miles away, and the other children were living elsewhere from the east coast to Colorado. All began to formulate their own responses, and try to grasp the enormity of the information and the devastation to life as it had existed only days before. Elizabeth and Teddy had gone from the excitement of the news of a new baby and sharing it with all of the family, adding another child to their son, then to being overjoyed with the prospect of twins, to this.

The prospects were throwing everything into disarray. All of the hopes were being overcome by fears, by the unknown, by the uncontrollable, by challenges never before even contemplated, and requiring actions for which they feared they were not prepared, too much information, not enough information, which is the right information, what is the correct course of action. How do we make a choice? How can we make a choice? What do the doctors say? What is right? How will we know?

One moment Teddy and Elizabeth are like any other young professionals in a city full of young professionals, doing things and worrying about all of the everyday markers of life, selecting furniture for their house or the color to paint the walls, or where to hang the latest decoration, what clothes to get, do we have a babysitter for the weekend, did you remember to walk the dog, is everything going ok at work, what about that project that was due, all of that. Problems that aren't really problems, or at least are solvable with a bit of attention.

Self doubt and questioning, and everything in between. Did I, did we, do something or not do something we should have? Why us? Fear that absolutely grabs and squeezes your heart, tears that won't stop, thoughts that you cannot, repeat cannot, let this win. Somehow you, we, must confront this and reach a course that will produce the best result. What are the options, Do we even know? Who does know? Aren't there answers? Are there only questions for us? What do we do?

That was the scenario confronted over the first days by Teddy and Elizabeth. Then it was reconfronted 500 miles away in Cincinnati by my wife and by me, and in the homes of the other sisters and brother of Teddy and Elizabeth, with all trying to understand and provide whatever help possible. Do you need visitors was met with "No, just pray and give what advice you think might help, this is something we have to work through with the doctors and priests here," came back their response.

The learning curve was going at warp speed for all involved. There were scenarios of medical choices—try to remove the baby girl, and not damage her brother, leave both to develop and see, remove both, what is Down Syndrome, what are those ramifications, what effect will it have on life going forward, for her, for the rest of the family, who can help, who knows what the risks are, can we afford the expense, what are the options, what is right, what is moral, how do we decide? All these questions and more. Advice that the long term effect on the family, the other child, children, the marriage and the stress might dictate one course, and the doctors were understandably noncommittal, but could at least provide help with describing options and expectations.

In the end, the choice was life—Elizabeth would carry the babies, both of them to term, and whatever the outcome, Teddy and Elizabeth found the courage and fortitude for that decision. Both babies were born at their time, and after a week in the hospital, mother and Brooks came home, while sister Mamie Grace was required to live at the hospital for several months before coming home. Teddy spent every night in her hospital room with her. When she could finally come home to her mother and two brothers, she required oxygen. The unusual part was that her eyes sparkled in alert wonderment at all about her, as if she was determined to take everything in, as if she knew something the rest of us didn't, this opportunity might not last, while her twin brother Brooks slept in the same crib with her and mostly dozed. When you

looked closely you could detect the Down Syndrome slant to her eyes but it was very slight, and could easily be overlooked. She moved her arms and legs, looked at her hands and fingers, and was much more precise in those small motor movements than her twin. Mamie Grace was a source of joy and wonderment and pride for her parents and grandparents. Teddy and Elizabeth had made a hard choice, and the right choice, but all was not well with little Mamie Grace's heart. The doctors had warned that it appeared an operation would be necessary and that six months of age would be the earliest optimal time for it, and they hoped for that amount of time. But several weeks after Mamie Grace got to come home, the surgeons determined that her heart was not functioning as hoped and she was readmitted to the hospital and only days later, it was determined that there was no more waiting. Mamie Grace had to undergo an operation on her heart, but there were no modern medical miracles left for her. Mamie Grace died a week later. The funeral was intensely sad but unforgettable in the grace and strength demonstrated by Teddy and Elizabeth throughout. Brothers Brooks and Hudson have since been joined by younger brother Gates. Teddy and Elizabeth have established a charity called Mamie's Mile, which event features an annual walk for families and also an evening at a department store with over \$30,000 raised for the hospital that provided care for Mamie Grace. Her memory lives, good works come from her short lovely life, and a new family tradition has been established. The story has not ended, only an event.

There was first the call one Friday night from our second son, Barrett then living in Chicago, inquiring about an appendicitis attack he had when he was young and what could Angie tell him about it. “Why do you want to know about that?” drew a response that they had taken their 3 year old daughter Mimi to Northwestern Children’s Hospital with a fever where there had been a preliminary diagnosis of a ruptured appendix. By Saturday night a second phone call threw lives into turmoil. Mimi had leukemia. She was only 3, and had a 1 year old baby sister. Barrett and Adrienne had bought a townhouse in Lincoln Park over a year ago, and were sure it would only take 3 or 4 months to put right after 30 plus years of being owned by a college professor who had done nothing to it since moving in, and they had finally given up and moved in with the remaining workers in an effort to rush, if that’s the correct word, completion. Once again terror came home to roost. Despite having Angie’s father, a brother, my brother and a brother-in-law all radiologists, the particulars of leukemia were not in our heads, other than when we had been Mimi’s age, children to my recollection did not survive that horrible disease. Again the learning curve went into high gear, but the internet for all of its failings was at least comforting, if such was possible, since as fortune would have it no answers were available that night from any family members. By Monday morning at 8am, we were exiting a plane at Midway and a half hour later on a long escalator with overnight bags in tow being escorted by a surgeon in his scrubs for whom it took no time to

realize what he had come upon, as he led us to the very efficient receptionist who directed us to an elevator bank and another receptionist and directions to Mimi's room. There Barrett and Adrienne with a sweet and very passive little Mimi resided, with multiple doctors and nurses becoming friends and starting what was to be a 30 month regimen of Mimi's treatment. What Angie and I had gleaned in our rush for knowledge was that childhood leukemia treatment had made wondrous advances and was approaching if not exceeding a 95% cure rate, with those results continuing to get better with each year. Family members had in the interim reached us and confirmed what we were learning. In the meantime Barrett and Adrienne were on the advanced learning curve too, and the hospital had commenced classes for them, and their own loose leaf binders to get their new lives off to the fast start that was going to be required, terrifying as it was. Angie and I were able to stay for that first week and Adrienne's dad was able to come for the following week, and afford them the assistance reorienting their new lives. Workmen, the dog walker, and the one year old Ainsleigh's sitter among others all needed to be let into the house. Adrienne and Barrett needed to have breaks as well. All life would change over the 30 month protocol the chemo treatment required, and be directed by it. The first portion of the treatment was basically a month in the hospital, at the end of which, Mimi had lost her mass of red curls. Weekly trips and admissions followed thereafter with steroids and blood drawings all necessary, but very hard to explain to a three year old. After

the first month, the news was that no cancer cells were detectable, which had been the hoped for result. Mimi's diet and activities were proscribed by the physicians. She could go to school, provided she was up to it, and her blood counts were appropriate. If another child came with a cold, Adrienne would fetch Mimi. The teachers and staff were alerted and on board. The children were all told that Mimi would lose her hair and that her leukemia was not contagious, and they couldn't catch it. Mimi matter of factly answered her classmates' questions as if she were the doctor. Normality revised and accepted.

As impressive as the Northwestern Children's Hospital and its staff were, Adrienne and Barrett's friends were a match, bringing more food, dinners, and treats for the girls, and games, books and offers to help in any way they could. Adrienne and Barrett were devoted to both girls, and when Mimi lost her red curls, even though her own red hair was much shorter, Ainsleigh got a buzz cut too, so both sisters looked the same. In short all effort has been made to keep Mimi's life as close to what it would have been had not she gotten the leukemia diagnosis.

Mimi has been able to continue with school and had started out extremely precocious, and continues on that same course. The family has chosen to drive to Cincinnati for visits to keep Mimi and her reduced immune system as much out of harm's way as possible, and while they have had to delay a couple of trips to Florida to be with us, after a rebalancing of her white cell counts, those plane trips have gone

forward. The family member radiologists have spoken with the Northwestern physicians and glowingly reported back about their cooperation and willingness to keep them informed and share any information or records desired, and of course Northwestern's reputation is in a category with our own Children's Hospital, all of which is unbelievably comforting, and especially so for Mimi's grandparents.

Mimi is now 5 and has another 9 months before her chemo protocol is completed, but all signs are positive, and as we speak tonight she is enjoying a trip to Disney Land with all of the Frozen crowd and Star Wars events a five year old could hope for and with her parents and little sister to enjoy it with her. While apprehension continues to linger close to the surface, at this point, life is indeed good.

In appreciation of the support they have received through St. Baldrick's Foundation, Barrett and Adrienne have sponsored events that raised almost \$20,000 to benefit childhood leukemia research, in the two years they have been on this journey. Neither the story nor the event have yet ended, and this story, too, does go on.

As others have learned of Mimi's leukemia, many have told us of their similar events or offered helpful advice. One friend from my high school days thought I might find of help a book a friend had written. Letters from a Distant Shore was written by Marie Lawson Fiala. She was born in Czechoslovakia and was brought to the U.S. as a child, working and studying hard to earn scholarships to Stanford undergraduate

and Law schools, the first in her family and the only one in her rural high school class to attend college. She was practicing law in Berkeley, married to a rafting guide she met on the Colorado river, who when it came time to settle down, with two partners had started his own investment firm. Life was going along swimmingly, with two boys and a daughter, a California 1930's house, professional successes and all right in the world. Her Catholic heritage while strong, had in the ways of our times, not continued in the same everyday masses of her parents who had raised Marie and her 3 sisters on laboring wages. Her husband was the son of an Episcopal priest, and that had become their chosen religion. Jeremy, her oldest was an active, athletic, considerate, thoughtful and caring 13 year old, when in the middle of their idyllic lives, Jeremy collapsed in their living room, his right side paralyzed, his eye black, his voice and movements becoming attenuated as his understanding and communicating dissipated before her eyes. Their world had ceased and a new world was coming and there was no return. Marie tells of the 911 call and the mad rush to Children's Hospital in West Oakland and the weeks of trying to live in Jeremy's rooms, with noises throughout the nights and long days of trying to help with Jeremy since that impoverished and overextended hospital had neither funds nor personnel to provide other than very basic care as his vegetative state lingered with no conclusive word on what might happen—just allow the body to heal itself seemed the best that could be offered. Even simple things as a shower or privacy to take one,

or catch some sleep or a bite to eat—what to do about the younger children, jobs, trading off time by the spouses, every aspect of a team all going the same direction with matters being handled in a regular and sustainable manner—all this was now open to the vagaries of unknown events and expectations. The first week, Jeremy barely appeared alive and it was not sure that he would come out of his coma stage. The second week was similar and then a third. By this time Marie and Kris had devoured all medical information they could, had tried to keep their other two children on track with their own lives, had accepted that they could not manage Jeremy when they could bring him home and would have to sell their beloved house and find a simple one floor plan house where Jeremy could be wheeled in and all of his medical equipment accommodated.

Marie's law partners told her to do what was necessary for her family and come back to their firm when life was under control, while Kris's partners told him the same. The closing on the sale of their house and purchase of their new house hit a snag, and Marie's law firm generously provided the funds to allow both to occur while they owned both houses for a month or two. In the interim, the internet had allowed Marie to keep their friends up to date with everything and the correspondence list grew and grew as friends added their friends.

Then something magical occurred. It was not sure when Jeremy would be able to speak again, if ever, and a prayer vigil was organized. After its conclusion of having

everyone pray for Jeremy at the same hour, the next day Jeremy began talking, and regaining strength. He could stand alone, where before he could barely move any body part and had to be manipulated by the physical therapy aides. Jeremy said he just felt like standing and talking, and so he did. Those prayers by others appear to be the only explanation. Jeremy himself was not aware they were being performed beforehand. The doctors said they had never seen anything like it.

Jeremy's improvement continued, and The University of San Francisco Medical Center offered to perform surgery on his brain with a gamma knife that was experimental and exceedingly risky, as if it did not succeed, neither might Jeremy. Prayers of many again over the now expanded lists of followers was organized. Jeremy's operation was a success and he was able to come home to live with his family, return to high school, graduate from college, gain meaningful employment and live independently. He still has to wear compression stockings and does not have all of the movements of his younger days, but he is living his own life and unless you knew his background, appears totally normal in every way. His parents have gotten through all of this with changed perspectives of course but with an attitude that they can succeed, and their faith and personal recognition of prayer and its power have prevented what could otherwise have been a greater tragedy. Their lives and their story continue on, and now have been shared with everyone here, to use or not, to be affected by it or not, but the story has not ended. Marie cites several studies in

her book controlled for knowledge where there were prayers being said by a large number of people, resulting in miraculous recoveries of individuals suffering what were otherwise thought to be conditions of uncertain recoveries and outcomes. Those afflicted did not know others were praying for them, and their conditions improved beyond what could have been hoped for, or what had been medically expected or could be explained. The only explanation was that the prayers of a large number of individuals had directed some energy toward a single person's ailments and effected a bettering of his condition.

Her family has certainly encountered this, and now since you know of this, their story continues for you as well to make of it what you will.

Our family through my sons and their wives has taken what might fairly be seen as an attitude of avoidance toward death and turned it toward the positive, affirming life and effecting a positive result from what otherwise was only a tragedy, an altogether satisfying result.

Ernest Eynon

May 23, 2016