

The “Almost” Back Page – By Allen Goben

Friends, family, work, play... the things that make a life. Sometimes they make a difference. It takes talent to balance it all, energy to make it work, and compassion to make it worthwhile. It takes heart to see bigger meaning and soul to begin to understand that meaning. How special is it, then, when a friend, family member, coworker, and “life of the party” teacher opens the door to that understanding for others?

Through our busy lives we often fleetingly enjoy moments. Sometimes we glimpse the Universe and its infinity. If we’re lucky enough, we can touch it... brush up against God in a moment of stillness... everywhere and everywhen in a single moment that lasts for a second or maybe three lifetimes. In that moment of lifetimes, it doesn’t really matter. What matters is that we get there and feel the energy of the Universe, of God, of the moment.

So often, people are too busy to notice. Days, months, and years go by with treasured moments of connection lost as people are off searching for what someone has told them to look for. In this day-to-day controlled chaos, we so often forget to pause and embrace the stillness within... or even remember it is there... waiting like a present under the tree to be opened for ultimate joy if only we would notice it. But, if we look up for just a second... if we lift our awareness above the daily grind and listen, a teacher will appear and help open the door.

Does the teacher know how many lives he touches? Does it matter if he knows? Or, is it enough that the lives are touched? For many years a column called *The Back Page* has appeared from the mind, heart, and soul of such a teacher. Often, his gracious and eloquent words honor others. Stories of friends, family, and acquaintances alike are shared, and they all have distinguished themselves in some way. Usually, it is the way of helping others, and often by the way of teaching. So, who honors the Teacher? Really, everyone who learns from the lesson, who smiles at the story, or who passes along the column to others that might benefit. It takes true talent to capture a moment and make it come to life, but even more to offer of oneself such personal insights so that others may learn. A true teacher not only lights the path, but also lights the fire within so that the path fades into the background... leaving only a moment of stillness and connection that touches everything and seems to last forever... or for just a second.

Our hearts are never so open as in a moment of grief or a moment of joy. And, as the Teacher shares his moments of joy and grief, it opens our hearts to something more than ourselves. His stories of heroes so often remind us of our own heroes. Does he know how many times we thank and acknowledge our own heroes from his inspirational messages? Does he know that the open door to his world, to his experience, is something that we treasure? Does he know that the gift is not under the tree... it’s just on the back page... encouraging us to find the Universe in a single precious moment. Leading us on a treasure hunt in our own back yard, the Teacher helps us find a path to higher ground. He helps us take a higher road to deeper meaning, and helps us find and appreciate everyday miracles. That’s the true gift this holiday season... a Teacher to help others aim high. This is my gift to that Teacher, Dennis Doggett... Whatever he is to you... friend, family, coworker, or “life of the party” pal... may your holiday be blessed by his lifetime of wisdom shared on *The Back Page*. Les Brown said, “It’s better to aim high and miss than to aim low and hit...” May your holiday be blessed with a focus on high goals, enlightened conversation, and friends and family like Dennis who give of themselves as only teachers can do.