

Paynesville Press

www.paynesvillearea.com

Wednesday, January 7, 2004

Volume 117, No. 1

Isn't it amazing?

I read a lot. Frequently I come across books, poems, or essays about which I think, "I wish I had written that" or possibly, "I wish I could write like that." For Christmas I gave Mary a book that qualifies on both counts. It is a simple book, a little over 500 words. The drawings are crude but whimsical - not particularly colorful. It is the thoughts that are beautiful.

The book is *I Am Amazed* by Jodi Hills. The subtitle is "take a look around and you will be too." What I hope to do with this column is capture that spirit and, hopefully, encourage you to do just that - take a look at this truly amazing place we live.

A really good look.

To do so I will quote Ms. Hills often and fashion a thought or two of my own. I know I cannot capture the exquisite nature of the book. For that you need to hustle to the nearest bookstore or gift shop to pick up your own copy.

The book is about people. The author describes it as "a tribute to the people around us... the ones we forget to thank, forget to touch, and so often the ones closest to us that we overlook. But they are out there, with their dreams and struggles."

It is about us. All of us.

"I admire those," Ms. Hills wrote, "who wake each morning and find a reason to smile, and then give you theirs for no reason at all." I'm not a morning person myself. I don't bounce out of bed and cheerfully greet the day. But there are so many people around me who do. Mary is like that. She has a personality that brightens wherever she is. I meet clerks, waitresses, and neighbors who give me their smiles. What a beautiful gesture.

And that cheeriness is contagious. Within minutes I find myself feeling better. I not only admire those people but I am in awe of what they do for the rest of us. Thank you, Wally Thyen. Thank you, Cindy Fuchs. Thanks to all of you. You are amazing.

She adds, "I am amazed by those who show up, who reach out, and who look within. ...I admire those who touch without harm. I admire the fool who attempts what the intelligent are afraid to try." A friend of mine taught me that the most important job we have is to show up - to be there. Think about it. What more can someone offer you other than the assurance that they will be there for you? And where would we be without those who aren't afraid to try?

"I admire the vulnerable hero,

Off the Wall

Bob Cushman



those unwilling to be victims, and the losers who play again and again, just for fun." There are way too many victims in the world. Of that there's no doubt. The real heroes are those who refuse to allow being a victim to ruin their life. They won't sit on the pity pot. It's a matter of attitude. It's a matter of choosing to accept responsibility for your life rather than blaming others and/or finding excuses. It's about having the courage to live. Those who play for the sheer joy of playing the game are my heroes, too, because that's what games are for.

"I admire those who give direction without 'should haves' and 'supposed tos'... I admire the teachers who listen, and the listeners who teach." Wow! These two sentences are so filled with sagacity. I have often written about the value of listening. I believe it to be the most important quality a parent, a teacher, or a friend can have.

It's also essential in a relationship to not judge. There's a huge difference between leading, teaching, and giving guidance and trying to force the other into doing it your way or the "right" way. Relationships are about love and love is about respecting and trusting the loved one to choose their own way.

"I admire those who forgive, and I am amazed by those who have forgiven me." Nuff said.

"I am amazed at the wisdom of the young and the playfulness of the aged, and I admire those who dare the untimely roles of each." Anyone who has spent time around children and teenagers cannot help but be struck by how insightful they truly are. They seem to be born with an innate wisdom. We may filter this as they grow, but they hang on to enough to be the most amazing people on the planet. When I was younger I wasn't really that respectful of my elders. But now that I am a geezer myself, I find my colleagues pretty amazing, too.

Ms. Hills concludes: "It's you who amaze me.... You lovers and losers, you teachers and listeners, you faithful and hopeful spirits of playfulness, wisdom, and strength...you who show up every day and dance. It's you I admire, and I am happily, joyfully, and gratefully amazed."

Me, too.