

Word Worth



On line monthly magazine
and editorials

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November Issue Coming Out October 28

We at Word Worth mourn with our fellow citizens and salute the noble heroes who have given their efforts and their lives to save those directly affected by this attack on all humanity.



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


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

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Editorials

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Learning the Right Lessons

by Marien Helz

Renewing a Respect for Procedure

Immediately following the terrorist attack on the country Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, made a statement and began with cryptic remarks specifically to those in our security services. He admonished them that when they revealed information to anyone without security clearance, they were endangering our people and our country. Naturally, he was asked whether such breaches had any impact on the events of September 11th. His answer was not to his knowledge, yet, he asserted, that this type of breach occurred all the time.

When an expert on air travel was interviewed, he stated that we have regulations that would have prevented this disaster, but they are not adhered to.

A UK citizen was flying into New York City and missed his connection flight to Boston, and therefore took a train from Penn Station. While there, abandoned bags were left near him. He stated that several policemen were standing around the bags perplexed as to what to do. In England, abandoned bags would be immediately taken away by the bomb squad and destroyed.

Archæologists returning from Europe this summer were switched from a connecting flight, and their bags were dumped in a heap in the station where anyone could claim them or plant something in them.

A friend returning from Europe in the Spring, advised his companion to get out the baggage tickets because they would have to prove that these were indeed their bags. The slightly more traveled companion laughing heartily responded, "We haven't been to an airport where anyone cares who picks up whose bag."

Over the country, the guard is asleep at the gate, the watch is absent from the tower.

Our first lesson needs to be more respect for and adherence to regulatory procedures. This is currently absent from the simplest to the most serious areas of our daily lives.

A recent study reported that a majority of people do not wash their hands after using the rest room. This is a phenomenal breach of common sense as well as public hygiene with the number of serious communicable diseases around. Children spit on railings in schools to annoy others and are not disciplined.

Without looking far or giving much thought I can recall: 1) someone with a severe finger laceration in an emergency room where the resident put his hands directly on the cut just after he had attended to another patient with some infection while never washing his hands (that person developed a bone infection, and the finger never healed correctly); 2) parents taking a child into the emergency section of a children's hospital where dirt was everywhere; 3) people serving food licking their fingers while making sandwiches; 4) recent articles have reported studies finding that hospitals have killed up to 98,000 of their clients per year; 5) a pediatrician coming from the examining room of one little client to a newborn stuck his finger in the baby's mouth—not a washbasin or bit of antiseptic in sight—the newborn shortly thereafter developed thrush; 6) a newborn, neither of whose parents had the herpes virus, became very sick with it; 7) dentists and hygienists wearing protective gloves who touch everything in the office including dirt on the floor without changing their gloves, thus rendering the gloves non-protective to anyone but themselves; 8) a surgeon trying to convince clients that there are too many lawsuits, related that in an operating room something other than the anesthesia could easily accidentally be given instead which would cause

instant death—"It would be nobody's fault," he claimed.

Of the above examples, number four is the only one that is not an incident which has happened to our family or very close friends—and this is just a quick list made without inquiries or dredging deeply into memories of past experiences. There have to be procedures for ensuring safety and instilling respect for such. Informing medical doctors that they are not divine and do, indeed, carry germs, and must wash their hands just like the rest of humanity would be something that would cost nothing and would be a good start. An important next step would be public safety media clips, similar to the anti-smoking ones, which would inform the large percentage of the population which does not wash hands after using the restroom, that not doing so is antisocial behavior.

A crucial part of renewing a respect for procedure is ensuring that the procedures have sound reasons behind them, are not arbitrary, can be reasonably easily followed, and are not in constant flux so that learning the method is difficult and/or futile.

It's easy for people, during times of prolonged safety to become complacent about regulations and drills. We can scoff at fire drills and not be alert to the need for them. Fortunately, evacuation procedures for the Twin Towers was, apparently, relatively well carried out. A refinement of methods for exiting a building in an emergency that needs to be added, however, is to inform people that they need to leave the building as quickly as safely possible. What we saw there is what we often see during road work. The cars that just come out of the slowed down area don't need to be in a hurry, but if they dawdle at the 30 mph speed when they come out of the work zone, it blocks people behind them. In an evacuation situation, the results are far more serious. Those who survived the collapse of the building reported that the stairs were extremely slow because they were clogged with people. While that would always be the case with so many people needing to exit, such a situation would, at least, be ameliorated if those, once they were out the door were hurried along to make way for others.

Whether procedures have to do with security clearance, evacuating an area, or medical and public hygiene, we need to ensure that they are sensible and that they are followed. This is something that we can do. In our best, most technical companies, regulations exist and are followed that guarantee that specks of dust too small to be seen without magnification are kept out of areas where items like microchips are manufactured. Developing, understanding, and following methodology is something that Americans can do perhaps better than most other cultures. We need to revitalize our respect for uniformly following procedures in our daily lives beginning with something as simple as always washing hands when it is advisable.

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Columns



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Fall Colors

by Susan Johnson

The scientific basis for the beauty of Western New York's fall foliage has two elements--both caused by the tilt of the earth's axis to the plane of its orbit. The earth's orbit is 23.5 degrees off of perpendicular. Without this slant, we would have only one season because the rays of the sun would always strike our latitude at the same angle as the earth made its way around the sun. The length of our daylight would also always be the same.



Thanks to the tilt, we have four glorious seasons and nature uses light and color to define each of them. From the monochromes of winter to the rich spectrum of spring greens to the pastels of summer, our eyes are treated to her works of art. And then there is autumn, perhaps our most glorious and poignant season.

Right after the summer solstice, when days become almost imperceptibly shorter, hardwoods begin to regulate their life processes in preparation for winter. To prevent damage from freezing temperatures, their plant cells gradually switch from producing chlorophyll, which makes their leaves green, and begin allowing *carotenoids* and *anthocyanins*, which have red, orange and yellow pigments to prevail. With the arrival of September, most of the green has gone and the show begins.

Landscape Choices

While for some people a drive through one of our state and local parks is an autumn ritual, many of the same colors and effects are achievable without leaving home. Whether you have a small fenced garden or a sprawling acreage, a wealth of interesting choices exists for those who have full sun and the space to put one or more of these selections. (Some of the following plants do perfectly well in shade. However, the brilliance of their color depends on sunlight and without it, they will not be as vibrant.)

Unusual horizontal branching patterns typify *Nyssa sylvatica* (Black gum or tupelo). This tree requires some breathing room as it will grow up to 50' but the rewards include exquisite orange and scarlet foliage accompanied by blue-black berries. Its charms aren't limited to October either. Glossy green leaves reflect light all summer long and grow along the entire length of its branches, providing hummingbirds and warblers with a perfect place to perch.

Somewhat shorter and a native of Persia, *Parrotia persica* belongs to the Witch-hazel family. This shrub-like tree has tooth-edged leaves that turn vivid orange, red, and yellow in fall. For its first 10-15 years, it will have a shrubby habit and then will grow on to become a tall multi-stemmed tree.

Quercus coccinea (Scarlet oak) lives up to its common name with its elegantly shaped flame-red leaves. This tree requires plenty of space, growing over 80 feet tall and 10 feet in girth. But, for those with the room, this tree will tolerate relatively dry conditions and there are few others as stately.

It isn't necessary though to have an estate to achieve dramatic effects. There are a number of smaller plants that combine color with interesting forms. When planted individually or in a group across from an outdoor seating area or window, they can provide a fabulous vista. Here are a few suggestions:

Acer ginnala (Amur maple) is a graceful little tree from Northern China. Extremely hardy, it can survive rather imperfect conditions, turning vivid crimson in the fall. When planted in a row, it makes a good deciduous privacy hedge and can be grown as a shrub or trimmed to become an interesting single-stemmed tree. Summer seed coloration is also often spectacular.

For those with acid soil, *Aronia arbutifolia* (Red chokeberry) is an ideal companion to rhododendrons and azaleas. After providing autumn effects, its profusion of red berries will remain throughout the winter if not taken by the birds.

Another shrub that provides year-round beauty is *Viburnum prunifolium*. Its wide spreading branches with their colorful fruits and foliage are an outstanding autumn feature in a naturalized setting.

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf hydrangea) is a stunning small shrub in every season. Deeply veined leathery green leaves turn dark red in the fall providing a beautiful contrast to creamy white-flowered panicles that gradually attain a rosy hue as cold weather approaches. Rarely growing more than four feet tall, this handsome shrub has exfoliating bark, lending winter interest as well.



Urban gardens that offer only a wall can still produce color in the form of vines. Both *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* (Boston Ivy) and *P. quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper) produce superb autumn reds, are extremely hardy, and require only a relatively small patch of ground for their root systems.

All of these plants should be selected and planted in September or October when you can see for yourself the characteristics of their coloration. Care for trees and shrubs planted at this time of year are the same as in the spring except that during dry periods it's absolutely critical that the plants receive adequate water before winter arrives.

Fall Checklist

In addition to choosing plants that will add color to your landscape, fall is a great time to perform lots of gardening chores. The weather is cooler, most of the biting insects have gone, and you can give yourself a head start on spring when too many jobs seem to come at once.



Here's a short clean-up and winter preparation checklist:

Keep mowing the lawn as necessary and when you suspect it may be the last time, mow it especially short. Allowing the lawn to enter the winter in a shaggy state is an invitation to snow mold and to opportunistic rodents.

Rake up all leaves and use them as mulch in woodland areas or add them to your compost pile. If you have Norway maples, be sure to get every last leaf, bag them, and dispose of them to prevent spreading tar spot fungus via spores on the leaves.

Draw up diagrams for planting drifts of spring bulbs, taking into consideration color combinations and times of bloom. Avoid planting the bulbs in straight rows...they'll look more natural in groups. If you're hopelessly plagued by squirrels, consider falling in love with the many varieties of daffodils and

narcissus. They're toxic to squirrels and if the rodents eat them, they'll die. (Vindictiveness is forgivable when you've lost your prize pink tulips.)

Divide and replant perennials up until early October and then heavily mulch them to moderate the effects of freezing and thawing. Once the plants have been hit by frost, cut down any remaining stalks and clean up the leaves.

Begin preparation of new flower beds. Extend the edges of perennial beds as necessary.

Properly clean and put away all planters and pots. Tools should be thoroughly cleaned and oiled before storing for the winter. Hoses should be drained, loosely coiled, and stored.

Once you've done your chores, you can sit back and look at your own autumn color. You can also reflect on our great good fortune in being blessed by science here in Western New York. Hurricanes and typhoons are for those who live elsewhere. We concern ourselves not with natural disasters but with the variations of the prettiest red leaf and how the yellow aspen dapples the slanting autumn light in the loveliest way.

Incidentally:

With fall foliage trips contributing a significant percent of tourism to New York State, state and national hotlines have been established that track the colors as they move from high to low elevations and from northern to southern latitudes. Even the Weather Channel provides maps and reports. Here are a few hotlines and websites to help you plan your itinerary:

1-800-CALL-NYS connects travelers with the state's tourism department where they can plan their trips using the I LOVE NY Travel Guide and the I LOVE NY Autumn Guide.

Three of the most breathtaking areas listed by New York's tourism department include the vista from the Rainbow Bridge looking down the gorge, Thayer Road Overview Park in Portland off of Route 20 near Dunkirk, and the Genesee River Gorge in Letchworth State Park.

The United States Department of Agriculture also has a toll-free number to assist National Forest visitors. The hotline (1-800-354-4595) provides callers with an automated voice system for hearing weekly updates on peak color in different regions of the country. Additional information is on the Forest Service's website: www.fs.fed.us/news/fall.shtml

Fall color maps that track the progress of fall colors are also on the Weather Channel's website: www.weather.com

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Arts

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The earlier chapters of Father Heart are available in the April, May, June, July, August, and September 2001 issues in the Archives page .

FATHER HEART

by Banwell Goddard

Chapter Seven

TEN YEARS LATER.....1897

It was my habit to ride into town early on Wednesday mornings to pick up the mail, newspaper and magazine subscriptions, and any supplies we might need. The children looked forward to Wednesdays as much as I did since the day was devoted to reading.

Our schedule was such that we first put away new provisions and then passed out requisitioned supplies. Finally, we eagerly sorted through the mail and publications, took our respective publications and retired to our favorite reading spots for the rest of the day. Amid our otherwise Spartan lives, this respite and the pleasure that we all derived from reading seemed an incredible luxury.

On a cold Wednesday in February, I returned from my trip to find Roy and Grace unusually pleasant to each other and to me. There was none of the normal grabbing for the French newspaper or the magazines from New York. Neither child tried to get out of putting provisions away in order to garner a five minute head start on the papers. I became suspicious.

"Did the two of you finish your list of chores this morning?" I began.

"Yes, Papa. All done," said Grace quickly.

"What about you, Roy?"

"All finished," he answered.

"Are the ponies fed and brushed?" I asked.

"Yes, Papa and their hooves are scraped as well," said Grace.

"Is there anything either of you wish to tell me?" I asked.

"No, Papa. Wouldn't you like to sit down and read your paper? Shall I make you some tea or coffee?" asked Grace.

Of course, now I knew that something had happened.

"I think there is something that you need to tell me," I said.

"Why is that Papa?" asked Grace.

"Because you are being unusually solicitous to me and to your brother," I said.

"You say that we should try to get along a little better and so we are," she answered pleasantly.

Grace's sudden use of her feminine wiles on that morning amused me so much that I had a hard time keeping a straight face. All the same, I was determined to find out what was prompting it.

"Grace, I think you have something to tell me. You'll find, I think, that it is best to admit one's guilt as quickly as possible. It comes as a relief. Now, I want you to tell me what you're up to," I said.

"I told you, nothing," she said and stamped her foot.

"All right, then young lady. I'll give you one last chance. You are to tell me what you've done right now. I promise that you will not be punished. But, if you do not tell me and I'm forced to discover on my own what you've done, I will take you out to the barn and you will be strapped," I said. "Do you understand me?"

Grace considered this for a minute.

"I'm going to count to ten, Grace," I said, becoming impatient with her tactics.

When I got to nine, she finally spoke.

"I broke the sewing machine," she blurted.

"How did it happen?" I asked.

"I was just playing with it and the needle broke off," she said beginning to whimper.

"There's no need to whimper. However, the sewing machine is not a toy and you have been told not to touch it," I said. "You disobeyed me."

I let this sink in.

"Why do you think it was important to tell me this?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said.

"Because what would it be otherwise?" I asked.

"I don't know," she answered.

"It would be a lie of omission," I said. "Which is just as bad as a regular lie."

"I knew you would be angry and punish me and I didn't want that," she said.

"I am not going to punish you this time because I promised I wouldn't. But, the next time you lie by omission, you will be swiftly punished," I said. "Do you understand me young lady?"

"Yes," she said pouting.

"All right. Let's sort through the mail," I said.

"I don't want to read this morning," she said flouncing out of the room.

"Suit yourself," I said, "Roy and I will have it all to ourselves."

The temptation of her publications would soon lure her back to us, I knew.

There were only a few letters, one with a Boston postmark from the Meridian Hotel, two others from old friends in Lockport, NY.

I gave Roy the Kansas City Star and opened the letter from Boston.

Dear Philip,

When I wrote to you last year, I had just married Dr. William Booth of Upton, Massachusetts. It is with the saddest regret that I now inform you of his death. William was older than I by two decades but we had many common bonds, of which medicine was the strongest. We enjoyed other pursuits as well and got along beautifully. Unfortunately, years and years of hard work at Boston Hospital sent him to an early grave. He passed away just two weeks after we married.

It has taken me nearly a year to recover from the shock of losing him. After waiting so long to find the right person to marry, it was tragic for me.

However, I am now feeling revived and ready to get on with my life.

Dr. Booth, in addition to having a successful medical practice, was the only child from a rather well-to-do family. As his only heir, I find myself in possession of a considerable income.

Lately, I have been thinking about the circumstances that surrounded Annie's death. I have felt great remorse that, at the time, I couldn't help you in any way. You have had, I am sure, your hands full raising Roy and Grace.

Here is my proposal...I am planning a prolonged trip through Europe - perhaps a year or so in length. It occurred to me that the children are of an age where they would benefit from exposure to the arts and culture of England, Austria,

Switzerland and France.

I would, of course, pay all of their expenses, including school, while they were with me. Bridget, my Irish maid, would accompany us. The children would never be left alone or in the care of someone unknown. I know that would be a concern of yours.

Annie wrote to me of your devotion to education, languages and the arts. I am hoping that by accepting my offer, you will allow me to, in this small way, make up for my earlier inability to be of assistance to you.

I recognize that this offer will come as quite a surprise and that you will want to give it careful consideration. I hope that you can trust me with the safety and welfare of Roy and Grace. I assure you that I have only their best interests in mind.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Keith Booth

My reaction to Emma's letter was one of angry disbelief. What made her think she could blithely step into our lives after she had withheld any form of help when Annie died - using the excuse of a pressing need to finish nursing school. And why now? Just when the children had grown old enough to look after themselves, to provide real company to me. There had never been a time when I had more enjoyed the facets of their personalities.

I put the letter away, got the world atlas from its place in the bookcase and a ruler from my desk to measure the nautical miles from New York to England.

Grace had quietly come back into the room, unable to resist her French newspaper for long. She sat on the floor reading it alongside Roy who was still on the front page of the Star.

Roy noticed that I was studying a map, one of his weaknesses.

"What are you looking at," he asked.

"I'm measuring the nautical miles from New York City to London, England," I said.

"Why?" he asked.

"So that I can calculate how long it might take an ocean liner to cross the Atlantic Ocean," I answered.

By this time, Grace had inched her way over to the table.

"Did you ever go to England," she asked.

"No. The farthest I ever went on a ship were two trips that I took from Boston to Florida.

"Was it fun?" Roy wanted to know.

"Yes, in a way. It was a chance to see new things, meet new people," I said. "The first trip was rather uneventful but the second was exciting. There was the worst gale our captain had ever seen and he had been sailing for over forty years. Twenty foot waves washed over the ship but Captain Lowry was in the expert class. He kept our ship heading straight through the storm. Once the wind died down and the storm calmed, we came across two ships that didn't fare as well as we did. The first one had only one man left still clinging to the wreckage. We tried as hard as we could to reach him but the waves took him away and we lost sight of him. The second ship was loaded with sugar cane and foundering with the crew still on board. We were able to pick them up before the ship went down. From then on, we had so many hands on deck that I did nothing but enjoy the rest of the trip."

"What's Florida like," Grace asked.

"Let's look it up on the map. Here it is, the long leg surrounded on three sides by water."

"A peninsula," Roy said.

"Right. It has a lot of insects and a lot of carpetbaggers," I replied, "but it also has sand beaches, palm trees, warm water to swim in. On the other hand, there were alligators all over the place, no fresh milk, and no meaningful work - that's why I came home."

"What are carpetbaggers?" asked Roy.

"A carpetbagger is one of the unethical people from the North who, after the civil war, went to the southern states to take advantage of the political turmoil. They called them carpetbaggers because all they owned was in a bag - they had no roots or real property, and therefore they had no business trying to interfere with the government of Florida or any other southern state," I answered. "Now that's enough about Florida."

I flipped the pages of the atlas back to Europe and went into a short daydream about the children and what they might see with Emma if they travelled abroad.

Several weeks later, the children and I were having dinner. Each of them was describing in turn what had been learned at school that day. I liked knowing what they were learning though it didn't seem enough and it was, in my opinion, at too slow a pace.

Roy and Grace were both in high spirits. April was coming to Kansas and they both were frisky with spring fever.

"We learned about the American Revolution," began Roy.

"And we read from Thomas Paine's booklet called Common Sense," added Grace.

"And about the Boston Tea Party," said Roy.

"I just love tea parties," said Grace in a droll manner, "I wonder if the scones were any good."

"And what else," I asked.

"Smith Poupee's been seeing a Copperhead," said Grace with a leer.

"I beg your pardon," I gasped, standing up. Smith Poupee was a half-demented quick-tempered woman of no breeding who lived at a boarding house in town. Copperhead was a derogatory term for Indian. "Where on earth did you hear that sort of evil gossip?"

"Harriet Howland told me," she answered in a righteous tone. "And, she said that there's a nigger in the woodpile over at the Cummings' house."

"That's it, young lady. You are excused from the table, and you will meet me in the barn in five minutes where I am going to punish you for your use of filthy language and phrases."

"But, I didn't say it. Harriet did," she protested, starting to cry.

"You did something just as bad or worse," I said. "You repeated it. You repeated something said by an ignorant, prejudiced person and the thing that I find most appalling is that you weren't the least bit embarrassed about using such language," I said throwing my napkin down. "After what I've taught you. Why you are as backward as everyone else in this state."

Grace received five lashes from my strap for her indiscretion. When I returned to the house, she and Roy were in bed. I sat up late that night, too upset to sleep, thinking of bigots. Crude, uncouth people who think that they lift themselves by pushing others down. At times, it seemed that too many of that sort of person lived in Kansas. My children were learning more from them than they were from me.

I took Emma's letter out from its place in my desk and composed a reply.

Dear Emma,

I have been giving some consideration to your proposal. There are several important aspects of the trip that need to be clarified before I can made a decision. We need to correspond regarding the legal ramifications - is it necessary for me to designate you as their legal guardian? Medical care - what sort of reference list of physicians do you have if either of them should become ill while you are traveling? What sort of inoculations must they have? What is the exact duration of the trip? I will need information regarding the embassies in each of the countries you'll be visiting. Which ocean liner were you thinking of and what is the number of days at sea? Will you be travelling by train while in Europe? If so, which rail line?

The children would need to be enrolled in a good school while they are there for the school term. My requirements are that they take at least three languages, one of which is Latin and the other two may be advanced French, German, Italian or

Spanish.

My children are at a malleable age. What they are exposed to, good and bad, makes an impression on them. There can be no mistake about this. I want them to grow up to be good, responsible human beings.

I do not wish the children to travel outside of the UK, France, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, or Italy. You did not mention Scandinavia; however, that would be acceptable. They must not be left alone or in the care of someone unknown. A boarding school is the exception if I find it acceptable.

Please understand that I am in no way agreeing to the trip. I am simply trying to get some clarification so that I may make an informed decision.

Sincerely,

PHC

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