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THE DOWNTOWNER

Randy's Ramblings...

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My Hero

His little hand fits perfectly in the palm of my rather over-sized paw. On this day, like most others, I'm fairly certain, the simple act of holding hands with Grandpa is not among my grandson's most favorite things to do. Yes, at age five, Randall, my technology-loving "little man" would rather be sitting at "Grandpa's computer" surfing through the myriad of activities on www.starfall.com or www.pbskids.com. But, on this day, all he has is me. Randall, as perfect as he is, is not the most energetic of kids. He would rather sit than walk and walk than run but today he has no choice. Today, it's a trip to the park and a long walk. Reluctant at first, Randall settles in for the inevitable. With his tiny hand in mine, I watch as Randall walks down the sidewalk with that special little style that he is famous for. Did I mention how incredibly cute his gait is? Well, it is adorable!

Even before we get to the end of the block, Randall is asking to ride on my shoulders. "Grandpa hold you?" he says repeatedly. "No Randall, you need to walk. You need your exercise." I answer authoritatively. Never the less, his persistence continues. Somehow, my little friend knows who the authority is...and it's not me! Yes, before long, Randall is riding like a proud peacock atop Grandpa's shoulders, with a wide I-told-you-so smile fixed across his face. On this day...he be the man!

As I walk and Randall rides, I think just how incredibly lucky Randall's circles of friends and family are to have him in our lives. I vaguely remember a life prior to Randall. But, for the past five years...it's pretty much been all about our "little man." Because of Randall, I wouldn't trade being his Grandpa for eternal youth. Randall has made me appreciate the differences in people and the challenges many physically and mentally challenged folks must deal with each and every day. And, mostly I think about how hard this little man has worked to overcome the effects of autism. I think about how he often struggles to put a mere sentence together, yet so confidently surfs the web as if he's done it for years and years. I watch how his face distorts sometimes when he tries to convey his feelings. At times it's heart-wrenching and at other times truly inspirational. I've never seen him give up. God knows he has every right to. But he is a trooper. Mickey Mantle, Bobby Kennedy and Muhammad Ali now must step aside, because there's a new hero at the top of my list and today he's riding tall and proud on Grandpa's shoulders.

I hope each and every one of you can find someone or something that makes you happy and thankful during this holiday season.

~ Randy Allman

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THE DOWNTOWNER is a monthly newsletter for the Lincoln-Central Neighborhood Family Center. Our office is located at 1039 Sycamore St. See our enclosed calendar for the activities and programs that you or your family might be interested in or jump online at www.lcnfc.org. Please call the LCNFC at 379-1630 for additional information.

