

The CHOICE Connection

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CHOICES
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December 2014 - In This Issue:

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Quotable Quotes

"You don't stumble upon your heritage. It's there, just waiting to be explored and shared." ~ Robbie Robertson

"The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another's desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together." ~ Erma Bombeck

"Family faces are magic mirrors. Looking at people who belong to us, we see the past, present, and future." ~ Gail Lumet Buckley

"And thank you for a house full of people I love. Amen." ~ Terri Guillemets

Dear Jean,

Blessings in this holiest of seasons as you experience the spirit and warmth of the holiday and all those who strive to make it special for you. As 2014 comes to a close, I am reminded of a year of more work than I anticipated, more travel than planned, more new, more different, and always more received than given.

Two years ago, I chose a different focus for my newsletters and set out on a path to expand the sharing of gifts that I have and connect all of you, my readers, with the gifts of others. Along this path, I was able to reconnect with many whom have touched my life and meet a few new friends along the way. I was and am reminded of all the gifts we receive daily. From my heart, a special thank you to all who gave of their time and gifts in sharing their passions. If you missed any of these special sharing of gifts, check in at www.constructivechoices.com and browse through the newsletter archives.

There is a saying that we can choose the family of our heart while we cannot choose the family of our blood. It so happens that the family of my blood also happens to be included in the family of my heart. The gifts I have been given from all that I consider family have continued to direct me on my path. At a time when memories of family, past, present and future, are on my mind, I wanted to share a few thoughts about the meaning of family. Here's to creating a spark that shines a light on our families and what we have received in our lifetime.

With Joy
Jean

The Family of My Heart by *Jean Strosinski*

I am richly blessed. I have received gifts from the day I drew my first breath. I was the first-born and within eight years was the eldest of five. I was the first granddaughter to both sets of grandparents and first girl cousin after 3 boys. Surprisingly, and though these facts seem to matter little today, they were fussed over as I was a child. It seems there was an honor that came with all these firsts. I believe I was held up as a model to others in the family that came after me and can't imagine that felt all that good to my siblings or my cousins. I also remember there was a pride in the hope that we, the children, would carry on the legacy and heritage of our families. And I do proudly carry on the traditions of being a blend of Yankee and southern gal, with an ancestry blended of German, English/Welch and maybe even a little Irish.



One of the more important things I have learned as an adult is that my 'family' has grown beyond the nucleus of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. I may have learned this sooner than most. I grew up in a military household and we moved often, lived within the US and outside. 'Family' was never just down the street or across town. Family became the young GIs and other military families that shared in holiday celebrations as they were far from home. Our family of blood had a presence in letters and in phone calls and on occasional holiday visits when we were stateside. I grew up with an appreciation of cultures around the world. And one thing you notice is that family carries a strength in all cultures. Traveling and seeing the world was a great experience and one I still have an appreciation for and desire to do more of.

'Family' has come to mean so much more - it includes those, not related by blood, that entered my life and secured a special place in my heart. Over the years, and starting in college, Michael and I have both experienced a few of those '3rd' Moms and Dads - Bob and Norma and Bob and Cis rank up at the very top of our list. There are my in-laws including me in a polish heritage and a sister-in-law who is more a sister of blood. They took us under their wings, expanded our sense of family and shared their heritage to strengthen ours.

What IS important about family, is how I have learned to create my own - not born of numbers or geography, but of a connection of the heart and a desire to hold onto each of the gifts they have bestowed on me. Few of these gifts are tangible, more powerful is their endurance in my life. These gifts, each and every one strengthen the spirit of family and the heritage inherent in each family connection.

To the family of my heart and blood ...

Michael, my husband's gift of love and knowing I am the best I am because of him; Gail and David, my siblings, their gift of joy in living life today; my Mother's (deceased) gift of believing in my strength even when I couldn't feel it; my Father's (deceased) gift and love of travel and belief in the goodness of all people; Aunt Rochelle's gift of pride in and sense of family - she is my southern rock; Ron, my cousin on my mother's side, his gift of family strengthening my roots in the Midwest and fostering my love of watercolors and textiles; and Kathy, my cousin on my father's side, gift of keeping the history of our families and our legacy alive.

And to the family of my heart ...

Our godchildren and their parents for including us in their families - Brooke, daughter of Debbie & Dan; Abbey, daughter of Chris & Paul; Alisha, daughter of Anna & Dave; James, son of Cathi & Bill; and Jack, son of Lisa, stepson of Donna & Chris; Sheila and Tricia, for their gift of love and sharing a world to travel in; Sheryl, for her gift of faith - in God and me; Debbie, for the sharing of her creative gifts made with her hands and heart; Eunice for her extraordinary gifts of service to the public; Claudine, for her gift of unfailing support; for the Gregg Services family - our performance improvement team - their gifts of meeting every challenge is with a 'Yes' and our management and staff at HQ in Pittsburgh - their gift is being the best company in the world to work for.

I would need a rather large book to acknowledge all those I consider my family. Never doubt for a minute that if you have touched my life, you have strengthened the best of me for knowing the very best of you. 'Family' - may it always bring a smile to your heart as you remember the love and gifts you receive.

Tools and Resources FROM THE BOOKSHELF

[The Family Heritage Book](#) by Beatrice Bayley

[Genealogy 101: How to Trace Your Family's History and Heritage](#) by Barbara Renick

[Creating Your Family Heritage Scrapbook](#) by Maria Nerius and Bill Gardner

THE INTERNET CONNECTIONS

[Adoptive Families: Celebrating Heritage](#)

[How to Update Old Traditions for New Families](#)

[Family Traditions](#)

[Find a Family History Center](#)

[Family Search](#)

Reflection

Many years ago, my father asked me to join him on a journey to document our family history. We wandered through little backwood towns in North Carolina, through cemeteries and maps. We took rubbings off of gravestones, spoke to the oldest living family members and pored over old newspaper clippings. Each new name, new year, new fact was recorded. While it was a series of lessons in recording our genealogy, it become so much more. Peeking into the lives of family members before my time gave me a sense of how I came to be and what shaped my parents' beliefs and what over time have come to shape my beliefs and view of our world.

I invite you to consider your families - those of your blood and those of your heart. Consider the gifts you have received from them all. If you were able to take the next 30 minutes of your day and give a special thank you to a few members of your families - Who are they? What would you say to them? How will you acknowledge your gratitude for the gifts you received from them?

Whatever you have acknowledged that you are grateful for , write it down. Consider ... how has this enriched your life? Take a few moments to let these special people know. Share your memories and your history ... this is such a special gift - it is your heritage, the strength and core of who you are.

Choose To

Remember ... Your family ... Your heritage ... Acknowledge the gifts of tradition ... Incorporate a new tradition into your holiday ... Connect this holiday with your family of blood and heart ... Share your story, the simplest of gifts to give ... Remember ... and make it your history.



For Sharing Your Gifts ... Thank You!

2013's Gifts came from Bob Grassberger, Ann Lyn Hall, Susana Rinderle, Gail Summers, Vicki Van Horn, Rose Noxon, Patsy Boverie, Eric Tonningsen, Elke Wunderlich, Teri Johnson and Stephanie Fuentes.

Their gifts included interesting shares on failure, strong vision/strong students, diversity, transition, financial caregiving and self-care, time, learning organisms, time to visit, more connections, wonder as a child and life as an adventure, tending your talents and asking questions.

2014's Gifts came from Sheila Hughes, Ed Muzio, Mary Beth Shewan, John Ledwith, Melanie DewBerry, Stephanie Wilson, Ildi Oravec, Anna Watkins, Bobbie Allaire and Antonia Montoya.

Their gifts included information on de-cluttering, driving your agenda, spiritual intelligence, wisdom, the view, your soul work, Please and Thank You, change, the sharing of our gifts, embracing novelty, gratitude and family.

Joyful Observances

Universal Human Rights Month

Human Rights Week (Dec. 10-17)
Gluten-free Baking Week (Dec. 14-20)
Posadas (Dec. 16-24)
Chanuka (Dec. 17-24)
Kwanzaa (Dec. 16-Jan. 1)
It's About Time Week (Dec. 25-31)

Miners' Day (Dec. 6)
Pretend to be a Time Traveler Day (Dec. 8)
[UNICEF Birthday](#) (Dec. 11)
[World Choral Day](#) (Dec. 14)
[National Chocolate Covered Anything Day](#) (Dec. 16)
[National Re-gifting Day](#) (Dec. 18)
[National Thank-you Note Day](#) (Dec. 26)
Universal Hour of Peace Day and World Meditation Peace Day (Dec. 31)

Administrivia

My Constructive Choices Audience...

- * Professionals wanting to be at choice in their career and daily work,
- * New managers (and aspiring leaders) transitioning to establish a leadership role in their communities,
- * Individuals wanting to sort through the choices, build a more fulfilling life, live their voices, and...
- * Coaches who choose to step out, show up, and say - YES, it IS all about YOU!

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