

Joy Ride for Sale

By Dennis Knight

I hope you are in a mood to buy today, because I'm selling. I don't have brushes, a timeshare or a bridge, just the notion that joy is the vessel that carries us through life.

Now before I make my pitch, let me begin with a disclaimer. I have had disappointments and failures small and large, the loss of parents and a brother, the loss of a marriage, and I have outlived a son. I am ultimately shaped not just by what I have gained, but by whom and what I have lost. If I am not the better for it, at least I have a stronger appreciation for life, and the importance of finding joy in the journey. I know you, too, have had your ups and downs, and I'm probably speaking to the choir.

This week I was clicking through the channels, and paused to watch a five second news teaser of a little boy, maybe three, with a brand new cochlear implant, hearing his father's voice for the first time. He lifted from his seat, his eyes searched for the source of the vibration, and his face filled with joy and amazement. I didn't wait for the report because his beaming grin told it all. It was a moment his family and doctors will not forget, and it gave me a smile and a drop in the ocean of joy that floats my boat.

"Field and forest, vale and mountain, blooming meadow, flashing sea, chanting bird and flowing fountain, call us to rejoice in Thee." This is a stanza from a hymn set to the music of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, and it says in a few words everything I am trying to sell you today.

There is joy in the sunrise of a new day, and even if it turns into one of sorrow and loss, it always ends with the promise of a new tomorrow. A soldier on the battlefield or a child in a bunker, isolated from all we find wonderful, will find joy in these things, if nothing else.

Joy is a Viennese waltz, Glenn Miller's String of Pearls, a Beatles composition, or Johnny Cash telling us about the orange blossom special. Today I heard the tight harmony of the Manhattan Transfer grooving on a Sunday afternoon, and it made my day.

There is joy in that harbinger of spring, the first dandelion, joy in knowing it's not mine to battle, and a reminder to me of the joy of living where I do.

There is joy in good news. My friend and neighbor, who is my Saturday shopping companion, called to tell me she went swimming this morning. Her excitement was contagious, and another drop in my own ocean of joy. She's going again tomorrow.

I remember the joys of childhood. The morning aroma of bacon sizzling from Mom's kitchen charmed me and my brothers from our bunks like snakes from a basket. I remember summer afternoons perched on a cottonwood branch, quite satisfied with my modest climbing achievement, while my little brother scrambled higher and higher, hooting like a monkey above me. I admit to a little joy in knowing the stupid kid would never get down, but he always did, and I found a little joy in that, too.

If you are buying, I'll make you a deal you can't pass up. Just take this little beauty out for a joy ride and you never need to bring her back. A little smile is all I'm asking.