

MERCHANDISING

by Keith Evans, Director of Communications and Public Relations

The Wonder of a Granddaughter

I have a new granddaughter. My wife Shirley does too. Her name is Lindsay Kathleen O'Connor.

She crawls everywhere and may be walking before you read this. Her new mobility allows her to explore her fascinating, expanding world. Not a day passes without her discovering some new wonder that only a moment before I had taken for granted.

She lives nearby so we see her several times a week, though not often enough. She smiles when she sees me. We have developed a routine that she has come to expect. Soon after she arrives, or sometimes when I arrive home while Shirley is baby sitting, we go out on the front step where wind chimes hang. She grabs the wind sail and shakes it vigorously. Then she looks up at the clattering chimes and wrinkles her nose in pleasure at the noise she is making. Then she looks at grandpa and smiles. My heart simply melts.

I was not prepared for all this when my daughter Pam announced that she and husband Mike were going to have a baby. Children weren't new to me. We had three of them, all wonderful kids, although there were a few times during their teens when I may have had a momentary doubt about the wisdom of parenthood. But as those of you who have had the experience know, grandparenthood is nothing like parenthood.

Lindsay's arrival, and her presence in my life, may be the most wonderful thing that ever happened to me. It is not unlike falling in love again. Certainly Lindsay is the most wonderful thing since my marriage and then the birth of our own children, the last of whom was Lindsay's mother, the first little girl to be born in the Evans family since 1911.

But that was all more than 30 years ago, at a time when I was first experiencing, and not knowing always how to handle, marriage, fatherhood, a new career, and the pressure of supporting a growing family. There didn't seem to be time to do it all right.

Then, at a time in my life when all this had changed and life was getting too routine, along comes Lindsay. Suddenly there she was, doing all those wonderful things that babies do, cuddling in the crook of my arm as she took her bottle, that tiny hand gripping my little finger. Burping when patted on the back and yes, sometimes spitting up on me, with that look of surprise on her face, as if to say, "well where did that come from!"

Learning to smile, to crawl, to wave bye-bye or hello, makes

no difference to her; it has all been a wonder to me.

This little girl with the huge blue eyes, the blonde hair that spikes up in back, and her enthusiasm for everything new has done a lot to shake me out of my complacency. It has made me think again about how important parents, and yes grandparents, are. How important it is that children

be surrounded with an extended family that nurtures and comforts, teaches and challenges, loves and sacrifices.

I wonder too, how anyone could do any less than this for a child, though the evidence of mistreatment and neglect of children assaults us every day in the media. We have to learn how to stop it.

As a grandfather I do odd things now, like cover my desk with pictures, and make a pest of myself to others. I am amazed that some are moved by how I feel about this beautiful creature. But I try not to impose too much on the good nature of friends. I have been the

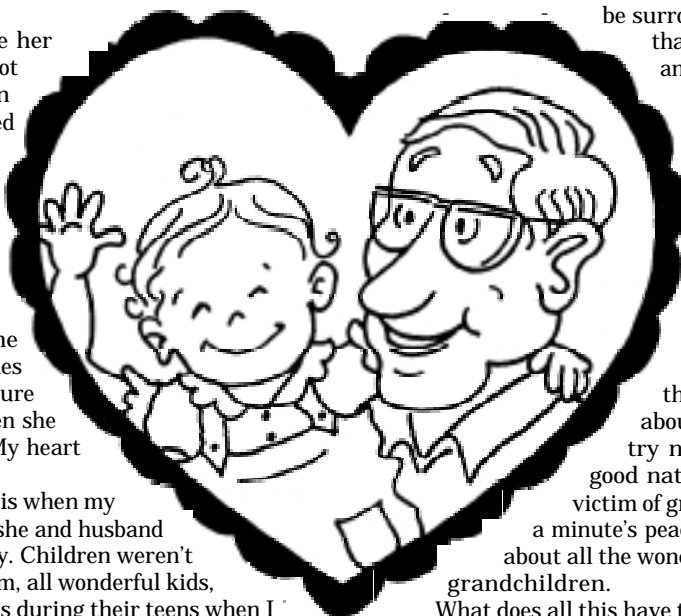
victim of grandparents who won't give you a minute's peace, what with their blathering on about all the wonderful accomplishments of their grandchildren.

What does all this have to do with marketing Angus cattle? Not much. It illustrates how easy it is to be enthusiastic about what we love and are deeply concerned about.

I know members of the American Angus Association who are so caught up in their Angus herd, their breeding program, and the things they want to accomplish, that they cannot contain their enthusiasm. It spills over onto everyone they come in contact with.

These people are usually very successful. Their dedication and enthusiasm is contagious. It attracts buyers who want to be a part of something this good and inspiring. I am not sure exactly where it comes from, this spark that defines some people and some business, and is so obviously lacking in others. But it is worth investigating.

Life is certainly a mystery, though often it is unexpectedly revealed in clear, unmistakable ways. I know, and I for one thank God for people like Lindsay who come suddenly into our lives to work their magic. Often without knowing it they help us to see in a new light the wonders of this world we are so lucky to live in for a short time.



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