

## Piper offers thanks for cemetery project support

As the Village of Lewiston bicentennial celebration is nearing the end of the year, I would like to thank all of those who so generously donated to make my historical cemetery plaque a reality. Having been overwhelmed with the response from my potter's field memorial project, I am once again thankful that I will now be able to place a permanent bronze plaque adhered to a boulder in the Oakwood Section of the cemetery. This will chronicle the entire history of its hallowed ground from 1800 until today.

After much research and consultations with Tom Collister of HAL and Mayor Welch, the final text was created and is now on its way to becoming cast in bronze as a tribute to the Lewistonians who helped to make Lewiston the village it is today. It is only fitting that the early settlers be acknowledged along with the other citizens who repose in its hal-

lowed grounds.

I am eternally grateful to those who have also thanked, encouraged and acknowledged my commitment to preserving the history of the village with the museum collection and my historical projects. I am planning a dedication ceremony in May of 2023 to which all are invited to the unveiling of the plaque and its dedication to all who repose there. I hope to eventually be able to raise funding to replace some of the trees lost to the ravages of time – to beautify the grounds once more, to create peaceful setting for those who visit there.

Again, my heartfelt thanks to all who helped me realize this project becoming a reality.

Russ Piper  
Village of Lewiston  
Historian/Cemetery Gatekeeper

Lewiston Village Cemetery rendering by Cooper Sign Company

## LEWISTON VILLAGE CEMETERY

YOU ARE STANDING ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE NEWER CEMETERY THAT WAS KNOWN AS OAK WOOD FOR THE OAK TREES LINING ITS BORDER. IT WAS A HAY FIELD NEXT TO THE ORIGINAL CEMETERY AND WAS PURCHASED IN 1875. HERE LIES EARLY SETTLERS THAT WERE MOVED FROM THEIR FAMILY PLOTS, WELL KNOWN LEWISTONIANS THAT MADE LEWISTON WHAT IT IS TODAY.

ON YOUR FAR LEFT IS POTTERS FIELD WHICH MARKS THE WESTERN AND SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF THE OLDER CEMETERY. THIS CEMETERY WAS ORGINALLY LOCATED ON FLAT WET GROUND ON THE CORNER OF CAYUGA AND SIXTH STREET. IN 1812 A CEMETERY COMMITTEE WAS FORMED AND IT WAS DECIDED TO MOVE THE CEMETERY TO HIGHER DRY GROUND ON THIS KNOLL. THE CEMETERY OCCUPIES THE EASTERN AND THE CHURCH THE WESTERN SIDE. MOST OF LEWISTONS FOUNDING FAMILIES ARE BURIED HERE. THE TWO CEMETERIES ARE NOW ONE KNOWN AS THE LEWISTON VILLAGE CEMETERY AND IS ON THE NATIONAL HISTORIC REGISTER.

## Searching for joy ... a little kindness goes a long way

The floor fell out from under me six months into the pandemic. My entire department was eliminated, ironically enough, on the day of my 17th anniversary at the company. It was not exactly my best day.

I'm sure many of you can relate to the pit in your stomach, spinning head of confusion, unsettling quivers throughout your body, and the "what do I do next" feeling that pounded us when the pandemic blasted into our lives. You may not have lost your job, but even losing the simplicity of routine was enough to unsettle many of us and force us to question the reasons behind many things we do in our lives. Where many things we do in our lives.

As with most emergencies in my life, I jumped directly into fix-it mode and tried to help my former coworkers who were scrambling to get their resumes updated. I desperately clung to the feelings I get when I have the chance to help others. But then, something strange and unfamiliar happened to me: My computer was quiet. Silent. Absolutely nothing was happening in my home office, and dust began to settle in places it has never landed before.

Now what?  
Following the self-help overload advice from that year, I began my new life by making a list of all the things I wanted to do, or said I would do, if I had more time. It was a great list: reading, writing, organizing, deep-cleaning, decluttering, losing some weight, exercising, working on my own resume, hunting for a new job, learning to cook new things, keeping a few old promises, working on my creative side and learning to play piano.

But, then it got real; that list never saw the light of day, and it became a crumpled, useless jumble of dreams jammed in the back of my junk drawer. It's exactly how I felt: damaged, useless, junk.

Loathing in self-pity and overwhelmed by my situation, I did the only thing I could bring myself to do: Nothing. My yoga pants, coffee and couch became my only friends, and I just sat there all day. Then I sat there a few more days. And then a few more. I began to form a permanent dent in my cushion, and didn't even care if the scene in front of me ever changed. Life was hard. There was no joy.

Then one morning, something miraculous happened. The sun came

blazing through my window so strong it drew me outside. I was cautious at first, not sure I wanted to leave my safe zone, but found myself smiling immediately as vitamin D entered my body and nature danced a number on my heart. I watched a family of birds for hours and eventually grabbed my camera. I found myself photographing every detail in my backyard – every twig, every bloom, every stream of light on the ground below. I was soon reminded of my love for both my yard and my camera. I wondered: Could this be my joy? Maybe.

I now realize that ditching that list and becoming one with my couch was the best thing that ever happened to me. I needed to detox the stress from my brain and find some peace in my heart. It was my time to be still. But things needed to change; I needed to turn the page and begin my next chapter.

Could I find my joy? Maybe.

As the holidays drew near, we did the best we could but, like most, our holiday was not what we had planned. Our annual visit with extended family was canceled, we wouldn't see my parents or sisters, and the churches were closed. The merriment, laughter and candlelight music were deeply missed. Christmas is my favorite time of year and, with the addition of joblessness, confinement and restrictions, I was not exactly joyful. I needed to get out and search. I needed to see the holiday through my lens.

This is how I ended up in Lewiston, New York.

Covered with a dusting of snow, the small town was spattered with a Christmas remembered. Feeling a small bit of hope swell in my soul, I decided to walk the quiet streets and get a few photos of what was around me. My husband parked at the far end of town, directly in front of a white, wooden gazebo. In the middle of the gazebo was a Christmas tree fully lit by colored lights and decorated with red and green ornaments that reflected the winter sun. I plodded toward the area to get a few close-ups and wasn't disappointed. The tree was lovely.

I smiled. Could this be my joy? Maybe.

In the middle of the tree was a green ornament with a red bow. The bow was twisted in a few spots, and I was determined to catch it with the best angle.

I was so focused on getting the right shot, I almost missed the card that was disturbing the tree's design off to the left. Eventually, I stepped back and took a better view of the scene. My eyes landed on an envelope with the words, "Please take this gift! Merry Christmas. God bless."

I returned to the car and opened the mystery note by my husband's side. Inside was written, "Please accept this gift or pass it on to someone in need. Merry Christmas." The card contained \$50. It was a random act of kindness that came at the exact time I needed it. I was immediately touched by someone I'd never met. How did they know I was jobless? How did they know I needed to feel as if I mattered?

Could this be my joy? Maybe.

Feeling much better about humanity and the ways my camera grasped a glimpse of a Christmas missed, we returned home to find our daughter in tears. She had been text-crying with one of her dear friends all afternoon, doing the only thing she knew how to bring comfort during tragedy. Her dear friend's dad was in the hospital undergoing emergency surgery and, due to pandemic regulations, no visitors were allowed at the hospital. Instead, my daughter's friend was sitting home helpless and worried. I took one look at my daughter, handed her the card and encouraged to her buy the family dinner. Passing it on.

Could this be my joy? Maybe.

During 2020, tragedy surrounded us. I witnessed the sobbing of small business owners who had to close their doors. I had to resort to writing cards to those who couldn't have a public funeral. I received texts from heartbroken friends and family members. I saw shelves of food pantries cleaned out and noticed more people on the streets asking for help. I was told, "I'm lonely. I'm worried. I'm afraid," more times in a year than I've heard in my lifetime. How could any of this bring joy?!

To be perfectly honest, I don't have your answer for joy; I don't even really have mine ... completely. I just know that continuing to look for it every day might be the answer. Whether I find it in my family, friends, faith, random acts of kindness, not-so-random acts of kindness, a great cup of coffee, or looking at the finest details of life through my camera, I know it is here. I know I can also be the source. So, I have de-

cid to continue to search, add more chapters, and keep my story going. I have also decided to be the source of joy for others, knowing this can bring me joy, as well.

Times of tragedy changes hearts; in a perfect world, it changes them for good. In a perfect world, we see others in a different light: We show

sympathy, we are empathetic, we offer kindness, we share joy. I am now trying to live the gifts of joy and life to the full. Sometimes this works; sometimes it doesn't, but there are amazing surprises around every corner, and I do love surprises.

Sandra Brese Rice

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