

# *From the Heart...*

## *... Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



### **Start Celebrating!**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 3, 2010)

The American Heritage Dictionary offers a variety of definitions for the word, celebrate. "To observe (a day or event) with ceremonies of respect, festivity, or rejoicing. To perform (a religious ceremony): celebrate Mass. To extol or praise: a sonnet that celebrates love. To engage in festivities: went out and celebrated after the victory. When looking a little deeper at the origin of the word, celebrate, the Latin rendering gives us celebrre, or celebrt-, to frequent, celebrate, from ceber, celebr-, frequented, famous.

So, when it comes to celebrating, we are encouraged to not only give honor to a particular day, event, or even sing a sonnet to celebrating love's enduring seasons. We are to celebrate frequently and even famously. How many of us honestly, regularly rejoice, and frequently just have a good time?

Life often drags us along in a never ending saga of trials and tribulations. We may also get tired of hearing the word itself. Yet, no matter the circumstances, we do have a choice to cheer up, even if it's just to celebrate that you wake up in the morning and are still on this side of the ground! But don't stop there. Let's do some creative brainstorming on how to celebrate. **What Good News do you have right now?**

When you hear some good news about something you've waited forever for, how do you celebrate your Hoorays!? Getting out that vintage bottle of champagne or chardonnay is always a pleasant tradition. Yet, I hope drinking and getting drunk isn't your first priority for celebrating. If so, maybe it's time to broaden your creative horizons on how to celebrate good news and everyday life. Here's your opportunity to get out of the routine rejoicing rut.

**What simple ways do you celebrate and create new memories?**

**What hi-tech do you think of to celebrate and create new memories?**

**What family traditions have your loved ones passed on to you and your children?**

**How would you like to begin new ways to celebrate?**

While you consider your responses to these questions, this month's lifeskill articles will focus on all the ways you can make this holiday season extra special for family, friends, and neighbors down the street. I leave you with an Oprah Winfrey classic: "The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate."

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# *From the Heart...*

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## **Simple Celebrating**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 10, 2010)

Celebrating involves creative thinking and creating memories in order to get out of our routine rejoicing rut we've been accustomed to for so many years. Are you ready to have fun with some planning? Are you ready to make new memories last forever? If so, check your "this is just more work" attitude at the door; and say hello to your long dormant creativity and confidence-building for really celebrating! Zig Ziglar, notable motivational speaker, encourages us to celebrate with confidence. ***"Confidence is going after Moby Dick in a rowboat and taking the tartar sauce with you."***

Creativity comes alive with this kind of confidence! Are you ready? Let's get started with simple ways of celebrating. Most of the time, we may just go out to dinner, to a movie, or just put up our feet and do absolutely nothing for at least part of the day. These are great ways to be spontaneous and say to yourself, "Congratulations." And we need to routinely celebrate in simple ways. Yet, celebrating is much more than just saying, "Wow, I'm so glad that job is over, and I don't have to think about it for another six months or a year."

Let's now dream a little and dream a lot! This is all about the what, why, where, when, how, and with whom do you celebrate. In the previous article, I asked several questions. The first was ***"What simple ways do you celebrate and create new***

**memories?”** One of my own more simple ways to make memories and celebrate my life and family is scrapbooking. Last year I pulled out two large boxes of memories on both my daughters. I decided after 25 years of saving every treasure, I had better put together those scrapbooks I promised myself years ago. About ten years ago I took a Creative Memories workshop to get myself started. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm was lost somewhere along the way.

Yet, in my more senior years lately, I recommitted myself to the project and finally sorted through it all. I also bought the materials needed to save those precious notes, cards, tapes, baby footprints, and prom corsages. I am just about to start working on my grandson’s baby album. . . this time before he reaches 30 years old! It actually started to be fun again—bringing tears of joy and even some sad moments. We all know life brings both and are worthy of remembering with gratitude for the blessings of today.

Here are a few examples of simple memory makers to celebrate your own memories—**The traditional photo album, scrapbook/family history book, legacy “treasure” boxes.** Legacy “treasure” boxes are decorative boxes that have a particular theme and hold precious memories related to that theme. This is a perfect way to hold dear those items that just can’t fit into a scrapbook. You can place them around your house with your albums and scrapbooks for your family and guests to get to know those special moments in the life of your family.

No matter the methods you use to make forever memories, they all involve time and commitment to what is most important in your life. Are you ready? With this coming weekend, give yourself some quiet time to consider how you want to begin celebrating

simple ways for you and your family. If you already have your photo album or scrapbook started, pull them off the shelf and spend a few glorious hours adding to each as you enjoy going down memory lane. And if you have an old empty shoe box laying around, bring out the glue, paint, ribbons, glitter . . . whatever floats your boat! Start decorating your first legacy “treasure” box.

In the next article, some hi-tech celebrating ways will be covered. In the meantime, **“What hi-tech ways do you think of to celebrate and create new memories?”**

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# *From the Heart...*

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## **Hi-Tech Celebrating**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 17, 2010)

**“What hi-tech ways do you think of to celebrate and create new memories?”** I imagine the first thing that comes to mind is the computer. We tend to assume that the computer has only been around since Apple and Microsoft came into existence. Actually, hi-tech computing ingenuity started much earlier.

According to Wikipedia, “The first use of the word ‘computer’ was recorded in 1613, referring to a person who carried out calculations, or computations, and the word continued to be used in that sense until the middle of the 20th century. From the end of the 19th century onwards though, the word began to take on its more familiar meaning, describing a machine that carries out computations.”

As a weaving artisan in the fiber arts over the years, I was familiar with the history of the Jacquard loom (invented 1801), which was one of the first programmable devices. Joseph Marie Jacquard made an improvement to the textile loom by introducing a series of punched paper cards as a template which allowed his loom to automatically weave intricate patterns. This Jacquard loom was an important step in the development of computers and programming because the use of punched cards to define woven patterns.

Yet, the modern computer had its beginnings with two separate technologies—automated calculation and the ability to program devices. No single device can be identified as the earliest computer because of the inconsistent use of the term in earlier centuries. Some examples of early mechanical calculating devices included the abacus, slide rule, and the Antikythera mechanism, an ancient astronomical computer built by the Greeks around 80 BC. One of the more fascinating computing inventions by the Greek mathematician Hero of Alexandria (c. 10–70 AD) was a “. . . mechanical theater which performed a play lasting 10 minutes and was operated by a complex system of ropes and drums that might be considered to be a means of deciding which parts of the mechanism performed which actions and when. This is the essence of programmability.”

Another marvelous creation was the "castle clock." The invention was an astronomical clock invented by Al-Jazari in 1206 and is considered the earliest programmable analog computer—displaying the zodiac, solar and lunar orbits. It had a crescent moon-shaped pointer travelling across a gateway causing automatic doors to open every hour, and five robotic musicians who played music when struck by levers operated by a camshaft attached to a water wheel. The length of day and night was re-programmed to compensate for the changing lengths of day and night throughout the year.

Mankind's ingenious ways to bring about the many hi-tech gadgets we have today offers us almost limitless ways to celebrate the hi-tech way and create memories that can be passed down throughout the generations. The basic difference between the simple and hi-tech ways to celebrate has everything to do with the use of the computer,

software programs, and creating digital libraries for your memories. While the more traditional, simple way is to create hands-on photo albums, diaries, journals, and creative objects that represent memories of people, places, and things you want to record and celebrate.

Using the computer as a vehicle to hi-tech venues, it takes a certain degree of technical aptitude and lots of creative thinking in the use of the software and online options available to you. If you want to take advantage of all that is available, you will need to have the right attitude about the learning curve you will be traveling. For some personalities, it's not an easy road to travel on. Yet, I believe any personality style can venture into the computer/cyber world to find awesome ways to celebrate and create forever memories as long as the attitude of gratitude is driving your motivation along the way. I encourage you to give it try as a curious student of life and learning. And if you need some technical help, by all means seek out someone in your family, your savvy teen child, a friend, or even hire someone to help you get out of the "routine rejoicing rut" to create memories that will last forever that everyone can share in the years ahead.

Here are just a few possibilities for hi-tech memory makers:

- Slideshows—The easiest do-it-yourself way to create your own CD/DVD is to use computer programs, such as Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, WordPerfect Presentations, or Apple's Keynote.
- Audio tapes/CDs—If you still have the traditional audio cassette tapes with your children's baby sounds and Christmas tape, I recommend you convert them to an computer audio format (such as .mp3 or .wma) to place on a CD/DVD to preserve these memories.



- Video DVDs—This memory maker takes you to the next level, combining not just photos, but action videos, music, your own oral history on video.
- Family Websites/Interactive Sharing—Here’s the ultimate possibility for preserving family memories for the world to see. Every day more families are creating their own website. There are now very easy ways to set up your own family website, with pictures, stories, family newsletter, email & instant messaging connections. In addition, there’s many social networking website, such as MySpace, Twitter, Face book, and more. You will need to learn the “rules of the road” for these as well.

If the hi-tech road to rejoicing and celebrating is new to you, I encourage you to take your time to avoid being overwhelmed with techy stuff. Your journey will then be a lot for more with each step.

To help you make the connection between the old with the new, the next article will focus on **“What family traditions have your loved ones passed on to you and your children?”**

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## **Celebrating—The Passing of Gifts**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 24, 2010)

This is the perfect season to celebrate those special family traditions that mean so much to you and your loved ones. **What family traditions have your loved ones passed on to you and your children?** I know one at Christmas time in my family...Grandma's ginger cookies were all placed in the stockings hung over the fireplace mantle. Those cookies bring sweet memories of bygone Christmases together with parents and grandparents when our daughters were very young. And a juicy navel orange was also placed there. You may ask, "Why an orange?" This tradition goes back to my husband's parents during the Depression years and around WWII and after where fresh fruit was scarce and often rationed.

This has reminded us of how precious a simple orange can be in the midst of our abundantly affluent world today. It also reminds us that there are many even today who struggle to make ends meet, are homeless, and without a job. We then are much more grateful for what we have and want to share our blessings with others who need to be encouraged.

There is one special lady living in the Boerne community who creatively knows how to celebrate "The Passing of Gifts." Juanita Chipman is the notable descendant of the Ferdinand Herff Family legacy in Boerne and the Texas Hill Country. Over her

lifetime, she has accumulated family pictures, journals, and memories that cover the last two centuries. Juanita wanted to share her life and family's legacy with the world. So, she wrote a book, "The Passing of Gifts" to give us a glimpse into the life of those families who came across the ocean to this brave new world called "America" to settle in the Texas Hill Country.

Dr. Herff's great-great granddaughter, 88 year old Juanita Chipman (Mrs. Guy), is celebrating the debut this year of her book, *"The Passing of Gifts"*, which has taken a lifetime to write. As Becky Crouch Barrales shared in Luckenbach Moon Newsletter, November 2009, EVERYBODY'S SOMEBODY, Dr. Ferdinand Herff, Pioneer Doctor—"We should never take for granted our personal or regional history. The book includes the remarkable life of this pioneer doctor, his family, and the beginnings of our Hill Country – especially Bettina, Boerne and San Antonio. This German culture still exists here today."

The impact of her family's legacy has significantly touched the birth and growth of our wonderful hill country communities, including San Antonio. I encourage you to obtain a copy of Juanita's book and enjoy her "Passing of Gifts" journey. Contact the Cibolo Nature Center ([www.cibolo.org](http://www.cibolo.org)) to learn where you can get a copy.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Holiday that brings you joy, peace, and new beginnings. I leave you with this question to ponder for the next article, "**How would you like to begin new ways to celebrate in the New Year?**"

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### **New Ways to Celebrate 2011**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, December 31, 2010)

Now that Christmas is over and the New Year is almost upon us, many will probably be hosting or at least attending a New Year's party. Are you heading for New York to watch the ball drop, or just on your TV while reclining on your cozy couch? Each year during the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square in New York city's Manhattan, the time ball made by Waterford Crystal along with electric lights is raised to the top of a pole on One Times Square building, then lowered to mark the coming of the New Year.

The Ball descends 77 feet within a minute to rest at the bottom of its pole at 12:00 am. Toshiba's Times Square billboard directly below the ball counts down to midnight as well. At least one million people each year gather in Times Square to watch the ball drop. An estimated one billion watch the video of the event, with 100 million in the United States.

For New Years Eve, some host parties and dinner, go dancing, or use the holiday to do try something audacious. Whether you're looking for a quiet, chaotic, fun or fancy night, Catalog.com information library (<http://www.catalogs.com/info/bestof/ways-to-celebrate-the-new-year>) gives us the top ten ways people spend New Year's Eve day.

10. ***Sleeping*** in their comfortable beds until 11:55pm to watch the ball drop on TV, say Happy New Year to family, then return to their warm beds.

9. ***Watch Ball Drop in NYC*** in very warm clothes and comfortable shoes, feeling one of their New Year celebration adventures can be checked off.

8. ***Walt Disney World*** has become party central for many families on New Year's Eve—with grand parades, rides, light shows and performances by your favorite characters.

7. ***Watch Home Movies and Eat Favorite Foods*** are a standard for families with small children, making their own tradition with a buffet of favorite foods and a night of home movies.

6. ***On the Slopes*** at some of the posh ski resorts who host New Year's parties—with white mountain scenery, a burning fireplace and yummy hot food. During the day the family enjoys skiing and fireworks by night.

5. ***A Romantic*** reservation at a nice restaurant or an intimate homemade dinner in the company of your significant other is a simple, romantic way to celebrate the future.

4. ***Southern Charm*** in Savannah, Georgia, is the spot where locals gather at City Markets New Year's street party for live music, dancing, food and fireworks; and book a cruise on a riverboat for a midnight toast on the river; then watch on New Year's Day the polar bear plunge.

3. **Run 4 Miles in Central Park with the New York Road Runners** while a mass of people stand pressed together in Time Square, or another, more spacious gathering 30 blocks north in Central Park.

2. **Fireworks over the New York side of Niagara Falls** as more than three million lights illuminate the falls for the thousands of people in attendance and the nation that watches the live broadcast.

1. **Host a Party** and get all dressed up, someplace to go with your social circle, then a pot luck New Year's Party in your home. Hang a disco ball and white Christmas lights, play the ball dropping the background and make a champagne toast at the stroke of midnight.

What has been your annual New Year's Eve tradition? Any of the ten ways listed above? In checking over the ten ways to celebrate here, **How would you like to begin new ways to celebrate 2011?** Which one(s) on the list? If you have young children in your family, ask each one what they would like to do? As they grow older each year, plan together something you all want as new ways to celebrate. I encourage you to experience the simply joys at home and the more adventurous ones nearby or across the nation and globe.

For families with young children, even teens, I bet you and your kids go to the local fireworks stand to shoot off some dazzlers and rockets, if you are not in a restricted drought zone. Or maybe, you go to your city park to see what nifty sparks fly through the air this year. No matter how you celebrate the start of the New Year, be sure to share it with loved ones and friends—making forever celebration memories for 2011 and beyond.

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