

Another Perspective

Written by Lori Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

Imagination creates the best entertainment

That time has come and gone when people from around the world spend an

intense period of time shopping, shopping and shopping more to buy just the right things for others. Sometimes people settle for something just to have something. Other times they go far beyond what's practical or affordable just because they want to make someone happy and go the extra mile.

It's fun to give, especially when the gift is a real hit. Yet it can be stressful when you don't find that right thing. Or that gift you thought was so perfect didn't go over as well as you had hoped or didn't fit. And it's all over just like that. People all come together with their shopping surprises, all wrapped up in pretty paper, then paper and ribbons and boxes and packing are gathered up to toss away.

So many times for kids, the excitement is in simply having a present to open more than what's inside. You so often hear of kids playing in the boxes that the expensive toys come out of.

Case in point, the grandkids had various gift opening pleasures on Christmas Eve, Christmas morning and again that afternoon. When the paper was cleared Christmas Eve, as is often the case in our modern world, people were looking at their computers. From what I understand, Austin, age 6, took a little piece of cardboard that folded flat and called it his computer.

I was no doubt in the kitchen, but his grandpa got a marker and etched an apple on the top similar to what was on his computer lid, then drew a keyboard inside. What a hit! You didn't find Austin anywhere the next few days without his "laptop" nearby. He used a clothespin to hold it shut when not in use, then changed to a paper clip since that fit the bill a little better as a latch when ready to open it.

So the next day, Austin came in the kitchen with earphones, singing along as if he had an iPod

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in his hand. It was an iPod all right . . . a cardboard one. Yes, the make-believe cardboard concept blossomed and Grandpa made him an iPod with the addition of a real earphone to plug into the corrugated piece.

But the singing was for real. You'd think he was singing to his listening tunes as he'd get louder when he pretended to turn the volume up. What a kick. How refreshing to see that the imagination still works to make things fun.

And his sister got a darling little round garden table with two swirly-backed chairs. It certainly didn't matter that her mom's cousin had already had numerous tea parties and dress-up parties with the set when she was younger. It was in perfect shape to pass on to the next generation. We had numerous tea parties. Austin grabbed a phrase from a movie he had just watched and insisted that he and Tayvin make a toast, each with their "cup o' joe."

We had our rescheduled office Christmas party when I had the pleasure of meeting little Alexa and Landon from Grant, Neb., two new members of our newspaper family. Alexa's dad was a winner and he told Alexa, age 4, she could pick out a prize from the assortment. There were kids toys and I found it so sweet that she picked out a little flashlight for her dad instead.

Later Landon, age 3, picked out a little spatula and his mother suggested something else. He was bound and determined that the spatula is what he wanted. I got such a kick out of watching him shovel the chocolate raisins from their container into the lid. By golly, that was no spatula, it was a shovel.

I went to play with him and we were soon pretending that the chocolates were rocks that we stacked up to form a mountain, occasionally eating one like a monster. We had just washed our hands and if a germ or two was involved, oh well. Then Alexa, adorable with dimples and all, joined us with her flashlight. She examined the rocks and separated the ones with little air holes, deciding those were the ones she should eat.

What fun. It doesn't take a lot of money to satisfy a child. Sometimes the money put into buying them what they think they must have or what we think they would love can be overpowered with using the imagination and playing with them instead. Sometimes what they really want is someONE, not someTHING. And it's great entertainment to watch their minds tick.

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Watch for those little blessings in life that don't cost anything and savor the moment!