

‘PROLOGUE’

As inconsequential as they may have seemed at the time, certain poignant moments of vision and clarity experienced in early childhood, can often go on to shape the very fabric of our being. It is not until later in life, if we are indeed fortunate, that we begin to understand what our young inquiring minds knew from the very beginning. The simplicity of truth can often pass unnoticed, be completely missed.

It is generally taken for granted that along with adulthood, automatically comes wisdom; that need not always be so. Along with adulthood, comes a much more insidious affliction, ie thinking that we are wise. Thinking that because we have accumulated life experience, our view is open and balanced and should be respected as gospel, because we are so adept and clear thinking. On the contrary, most of us unashamedly propagate this delusion, when we are more often bound by our conditioning; our biases and prejudices set in concrete. Somehow this accumulation of experience becomes reality and our point of view is not only justified, but as we believe, correct. But is it?

It has been said that life is purely a learning experience. That may or may not be so, but frequently as we grow into adulthood we can, by the very nature of the

process, unlearn as much as we have learned. Often, what slips blindly through our inefficient minds can ironically be the most important and basic of truths. Then, having overlooked this timely enlightenment, we are faced with the cumulative results of a plethora of knee-jerk responses and defensive reactions. What we are left with at the end of this process, is merely the remains of struggle; our jaded experiences having chipped away at our confidence, strength, charity and ultimately our humanity. If we are not careful, we can become not only bitter and negative, worse, we become capable of passing this cynicism on to our own children. Thus, the cycle continues... certainly not a pleasant scenario. But life doesn't have to be that way.

If we look back at the choices we have made, and the inevitable mistakes, one can see childhood and indeed life, in a far different light. The complexities of adult thinking and life can be somewhat blinding to the truth. The simple, most obvious, is often the most overlooked from an adult perspective. That is why children should never be underestimated in their ability to see clearly the ostensible truth. What they see, by virtue of their inexperience, is unspoiled and unbiased; an opportunity only afforded the young.

That brings me to the subject of this story, Josh Hayward and a very special friend of his, Harold. Harold had always been a friend to Josh, right from the very beginning. Josh's earliest memory of him was from his crib. Even then, as his eyes learned to focus in a new world, Harold's kind face beamed down on him, making him giggle.

Josh's mum Helen thought that Josh was so clever and advanced, as mothers do, and she bought him brightly coloured mobiles and endless toys to hang over his crib to keep him amused. She was beside herself when

he responded, but he was really looking at Harold acting the goat.

In those early years Harold didn't say much, he was more the strong silent type. But when a kid needed to talk, he was there listening. Every now and then he would even offer a suggestion or two, and what he said usually made sense, if not then, later.

This is the story of a kid named Josh, who grew up just as confused as everybody else. It is the real story of his enduring relationship with Harold. If only Josh had listened to him a little more, he could have saved himself a great deal of heartache and trouble. But as Josh always surmised, 'you've got to be in it, to win it!'

Life is about having a go, and both Josh and Harold went through more than a few experiences together. In the end Josh didn't regret a single one, and Harold? Well, Harold's, Harold! He nearly always has a smile on his face.