

My mother sends me the best e-mails. I don't check my home e-mail often because I spend a lot of time in front of a computer at work. I usually sit down on the Friday evenings I don't have to work and go through and delete all the Facebook and other items I find annoying because they are just taking up space and mean nothing so I can get to the good stuff — the one's from my mom.

One of the gems I found Friday night was called "The Old Phone on the Wall." It was written by a man who carried the memory of a wonderful, kind woman who he called "Information Please" for many years. She was the mysterious and wonderful voice in the old phone on the wall.

"Information Please" knew everyone's number and the correct time.

Once as a small boy he was alone in the house and he whacked his finger with a hammer. He walked around sucking his throbbing finger refusing to cry because there was no one there to hear anyway. Then he remembered the phone and the amazing person who lived inside. He pushed a chair up to the phone, climbed up and asked for "Information Please."

A few clicks later a clear voice said, "Information."

He wailed into the phone that he had smashed his finger and no one was home.

She told him to go to the icebox and chip off some ice and hold it on his finger.

After that, he called "Information Please" for everything. She helped with his homework and when he caught a chipmunk in the park, she told him to feed it fruit and nuts. He called her once to ask how to spell fix.

Then there was the time his pet canary, died. He called "Information Please," and told her the sad story. She listened and then said the things grown-ups say to make a child feel better but he was not consoled.

He asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She said quietly, "Wayne, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in."

Years later on his way to college, his plane laid over in Seattle. He had time between planes so he called his sister who lived there. Then without thinking, he dialed his hometown operator and said, "Information Please."

Miraculously, he heard the voice he knew so well.

He said, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause. Then came the soft-spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now..."

He laughed, "So it's really you," he said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

"I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your calls meant to me. I never had any children and I used to look forward to them."

He asked if he could call her again and she agreed. "Just ask for Sally, she said.

Three months later he was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, "Information." He asked for Sally.

"Are you a friend?" she said.

"Yes, a very old friend," he answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally had been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."

Before he could hang up, she said, "Wait a minute, did you say your name was Wayne?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you called. Let me read it to you...."

The note read, "Tell him there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

He thanked her and hung up. He knew what Sally meant.

Never underestimate the impression you may make on others. You can impact a life with just one kind word or deed.

In our fast-paced lives, it's easier to just keep going at full speed, never stopping to appreciate those in our lives or around us. It may take a little more effort to take a breath and say something kind rather than rattle off something noncommittal in our haste, but a few moments now can turn into a lifetime of good feelings.