

Several years ago, a close friend in Illinois was informed that he had a type of cancer. Through his battle with the disease, he would call periodically and we would occasionally have a visit. Prior to the dreaded news, we had enjoyed many years of an “encouraging friendship.”

He would be one of the few people I would vent my feelings to, talk over frustrations with or seek wisdom in certain situations, one of the few people I would categorize as a “David and Jonathan” type of friendship.

Several months after the treatments were completed, a Peoria newspaper had a call for articles in which people would write essays about individuals or events that had contributed to their lives in a special way.

One day I received a letter with an enclosed newspaper clipping. At the top was the headline, “The Fab Five that Helped Get Me Through.” Since he was a real sports enthusiast, he had written an article about certain individuals that had helped encourage him through his cancer battle.

It was based on a theme established by a great Michigan basketball team at the time, often referred to as, “The Fab Five.”

As I began to read, it didn’t take long for me to tear up when I discovered that I had been considered one of the “fab five” of encouragement during that time. That’s been many years ago, but somehow the theme of that article and letter that was received from my encouragement buddy, Jarvis Steiner, weighs heavy on my heart as the memories color my soul like the circus of autumn we are seeing in fall colors.

Feebly, I stumbled on the idea of a “bucket list” of my own, but not like the list of wishes people often make of things they would still like to experience in this life. This bucket is full of “fab moments,” classic recalls of special moments that now overflow from reflections of some of the most special moments in life.

I think of the walks to the old covered bridge that I used to take with my grandma and the fishing trips to the same bridge with my father. I can smell home cooking of the likes of meat loaf, apple dumplings, home made baked goods, caramel corn, and the delicious “mom cooking” that no one can duplicate.

I think of Julie’s first Christmas, when she unwrapped her gifts and played in the paper all evening, never looking at the gifts. There were countless basketball and football games with Jason and history research visits with Sandi, Joyce and I riding through the beauty of New England on our honeymoon.

Of course, nothing tops the birth of the children, their baptisms and great family times on major and mini trips, cooking out in the Rocky Mountains and overflowing fun around the family table. Then there are family memories that best stay in the treasure chest of recalls, but moments that are so hilarious they still bring laughter to tears.

There are the encouragement and friendship cards, many from a lifetime, all of which are still saved because I can’t bring myself to ever dispose of handwritten messages from other people, boxes and boxes of letters, culminated by the 9,000 plus single spaced typed pages of my “David and Jonathan” friend, Meredith Sprunger. No one ever knew that we were capturing every moment of our sports, historical and interest trips, conversations in restaurants, touching moments we observed from a distance, the costless treasures of life that no one could buy. There are hundreds of such experiences that are recorded by the two of us in that multi-thousand page exchange.

There aren’t enough pages available to record the recalls of the likes of inspiration that came from elderly neighbors, children, suffering people who held their heads high, and inspirational souls who never knew how they impacted or shaped my life.

Concerning the life of Jesus, the Gospel of John says that if every tidbit about Jesus that the disciples observed were written down, there wouldn’t be enough volumes of books in the world to record it.

The old song, "The Love of God," states that if all of the way God shows His love to His children were recorded on a scroll, the sky itself would never be wide enough to contain that scroll.

So out of my bucket overflows gratefulness to "fab thousands" who have touched me to this point. I've tried to analyze these overflowing special moments to see if there is anything they have in common and I have discovered a couple of things.

They are all moments that money can't buy or that has nothing to do with earthly wealth or fame; they are mostly God-moments that are totally spontaneous under His direction, no doubt, and they come from the hearts of the humble, not the proud, the Godly, not the worldly, and out of sincerity, not planned.

They are the foundation of what makes worth living and the basis for whatever remaining "bucket list" there is for the future.