By Jim Langham

Years ago, an old trick of the trade passed on by my father taught me that there is always one more picture left in a camera.

I have taken more than a few pictures with my camera over the years and gradually, the points where the batteries are located have become been worn and tattered. Consequently, there is not always a good connection when I put the batteries in the camera.

So here's how to keep it going. This is what my father told me years ago. You are to moisten the batteries before putting them in the camera. Don't ask me what it does, but it works. It's a good way to stretch the batteries and get at least one more picture out of a worn camera.

But that's just the beginning of how we saved and stretched money in the Indiana home where I was raised.

Never waste a rubber band, especially those wrapped around newspapers when they are tossed at your door. In fact, "legend" has it that if we don't waste things placed literally at our footsteps, divine good will come to reward us for preserving and stretching "usables" tossed by the wayside.

That's why I pick up every rubber band I see on the sidewalk, gather the ones wrapped around papers and save them in a container like my parents did. Around our house, we never ran out of rubber bands; they were kept in otherwise discarded medicine bottles and kept in the top drawer beside the sink in the kitchen.

There, we would also find paper clips that had been retrieved, pencils, ball point pens and other retrievable goodies that would save purchases that would add up to enough to purchase a tank

of gas in the long run.

People just look at me these days when I talk about the old retrievables around our house such as onion skins placed on our chest to open up stuffy noses during the night, flour placed in a cloth to draw bee stings and an aloe vera plant in the kitchen to doctor burns obtained while cooking.

The principle in all of this was pride in saving and utilizing special discoveries in a big game of life that always kept us looking for ways to retrieve “paybacks” from the world around us.

Creativity was part of it. My grandma and I would sit by the hour and cut pictures out of catalogs and create storybooks that I would then read to my parents; the beginning of authoring stories to be read to others.

One thing my buddy, Mert, and I never overlooked were coins laying on the street, by phone booths or sundry other places. We did this so much that we learned the strategy of retrieving lost coins with the same diligence presented by our Lord in the parable in the Bible.

Always look at the slant in a parking lot, especially at service stations, coins that fall out of pockets when people pull their car keys out of their pocket tend to run with the contour of the parking lots.

Coins retrieved in such “silly” games are then placed in a dish on my bedroom dresser and eventually cashed in as needed or when the bowl overflows. My last “cash in” brought $88.15, worth bending over for in the world that I live in.

So, I always carry with me a virtue from our family where we were probably very poor, but didn’t know it. There’s always one more. There is always one more picture, one more rubber band, one more nail (retrieved from the floor of my dad's shop), one more coin and one more idea for salvaging things offered up by the good world around us.

When I sat down to write this column, I must admit that I wasn’t quite sure what I was going to write about. But, as I learned from my family, in principle, there is always one more. There is even one more story left in my writing creativity.