

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 128

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with a young man who overcame great difficulties to become a famous surgeon. "Inspire" means to breath in and live while "expire" means to breath out and die. I hope this story will be "inspirational". The boy's name was Fred Epstein. Perhaps you will note that his success story is similar to that of Dr. Ben Carson.

I condensed this story from an article in the Feb. 1994 Reader's Digest. While the story is a bit old, it is still true.

- Fred Epstein always wanted to be a doctor, but had a learning disability.
- He was laughed at in the first grade because he wrote his e's backward.
- In the second grade, no matter how hard he tried, he could not grasp simple math.
- By the third grade his parents were asking, "What will become of Fred?"
- In the fifth grade Mr. Murphy had to give him a test orally so he could understand it.
- Fred's penmanship was so bad his principal falsely assumed he didn't care.
- His Aunt Lottie drilled him endlessly on the week-ends to help him pass.
- He was transferred to a school for kids with serious academic shortcomings.
- Somehow he graduated and was accepted at Brandeis Univ. In Waltham, Mass.
- He failed chemistry but with the help of a private tutor passed with a c+.
- The dean of a local medical school said:"You don't belong here, your academic record shows you're emotionally unstable."
- Somehow, Fred was accepted at the New York Medical College and concentrated on pediatric neurosurgery. He was touched by the innocence and unspoken fears of children.
- His determination and hard work paid off. He graduated from medical school in 1963.
- In 1982 the Reader's Digest wrote of his successful spinal-cord surgery on Aaron Blumenthal. The tumor was rare, potentially fatal, and considered inoperable.
- That article started a world-wide snowballing effect. Desperate people came to him from all over the world.
- Eight year old Julian Thurston came from Eastbourne, England with another "inoperable" spinal-cord tumor. Julian made a complete recovery.
- Infant Kunal Pradhan came from Bombay, India and his "inoperable" spinal-cord tumor was also successfully removed.
- The same story was repeated for Vicki Blackburn from Paso Robles, Calif.
- Nine-year-old Jared O'Donnell was due to participate in the national Junior Olympics gymnastics trials when he was diagnosed with an "inoperable" brain tumor. He is now another success story for Dr. Epstein and back in competition..
- Dr. Epstein now works with a team of qualified neurosurgeons and takes only the most difficult cases himself.
- The February '93 Reader's Digest article, "I Don't Accept Children Dying," was excerpted from his book, *Gifts of Time*.
- An autographed copy of this book was sent to his fifth grade teacher, Mr. Herbert Murphy. Dr. Epstein wrote: "Dear Mr. Murphy. You're my favorite teacher of all time. I will always remember your kindness when I was a struggling fifth-grade student at Riverdale. I will always remember you."

From grandpa's standpoint, all of you are just a little smarter than the average grandchild.

Certainly none of you have the learning difficulties Dr. Epstein faced as a child. Even if you did, it wouldn't keep you from fulfilling the purpose of God in your life. The Scripture teach: **"It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13.) Note that God works in the believer both to "will" and also to "do." Both the "desire" to do something and the "ability" to do it come from God. If God gives you a dream and a desire, He can also give you the ability to make that dream come true. So keep on dreaming!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce