

Our City

Joy

To me the Christmas season has since early adulthood been about sharing joy, peace and love; not the unnecessary giving of things, I am not sure if I have ever been very good at any of the three because it requires me to be so much less the introvert. I very much appreciate and admire those who are good at the sharing of joy, peace and love. They are my Star of Bethlehem; my Christmas Star. Often showing me the way when I am lost.

To those who chose to light our whole community this Christmas season my children, grandchildren and Sally's parents Don and Suzanne Johnson thank you for sharing joy. Our tour of lights could not have been more perfect among the fresh blanket of snow last Saturday. The favorites have been at the top of the list for years, but this year 741 Bennett and 375 Autumn Way were exceptionally inspired, followed very closely by 335 Fillmore and 596 Sunbeam. These home are decorated to the nines and one a very touching memorial to a friend gone too soon from this life. Other exceptional efforts include: 446 Cleveland, 170 Tyler, 647 Bennett and 739 Bennett. And, those certainly worth the time to see and enjoy are 355 Autumn Way, 353 Autumn Way, 560 Snowflake, 203 Tyhee, 743 Tyhee, 337 Jackson, 255 Van Buren and Neighbor, 885 Reed, 617 Bennett, Shirley Street, 716 Falls, 727 Falls, 704 Hutchinson, 820 Teton, 207 Grant, 306 Hayes, 1713 Falls, 446 Author, 516 Cleveland and 459 Cleveland. A special thank you to the efforts of the Courthouse grounds and maintenance crew for their inspiration and to the employees at the City's Waste Water Treatment Plant. Well done, one and all!

Beyond the traditional season of joy, peace and love I have been blessed with joy by so many people throughout this extraordinary year. The first of which is the love of my life Sally. As some of you know Sally is transitioning to a new chapter in her life. While she dearly loves her work in family law and helping others who often seem helpless to help themselves her true passion has been found through yoga and the joy that comes when the spirit and body are one in the same. In the weeks to come she will be retiring as paralegal and devoting her full effort to helping others, including me, find their elusive inner joy. She has, since I was 13, been my Christmas Star and will until my last breath, through this life and the next be my joy.

For those of you who follow these meanderings know that School District Superintendent Randy Jensen and I share a lot of the same passions and visions of what could be. Beyond Dick Brulotte and Roger Thomas I have not shared the same level of connection with any other professional colleague. Randy's willingness and dedication to make the improbable possible has been a real joy for me to work with both as a teacher and mayor. Where there is a will – there is a way. And, while seldom easy, improbable is always possible given the right leadership and dedication. That effort brings me great joy.

As the 2019 Idaho Teacher of the Year (TOY) I was filled with uncertainty, self-doubt and humility. I was intimidated by the title and often felt very much out of place; it was not fun and caused me to question much of what I have come to believe about education. Then I met Rosie Reed, the California TOY. Rosie comes from as unlikely a personal background as you

can possibly imagine. Yet, when she was selected as the TOY she was teaching upper level language arts to primarily all white and for the most part privileged students. She is the mother of six, five adopted, children of varying ages, ethnicities and other life-challenges. Her focus, like mine, has been about the value and the importance of equity for those less fortunate students she so dearly loves. Yet, beyond her family she was having little impact in that regard at her all white and privileged school. This year as the California TOY she has resigned her position at her current school and has accepted a new job at a school in another community that is anything but privileged and Caucasian. Rosie has served as a particular source of joy because she epitomizes that values held deeply mean little until shared with others and lived every day. She like Sally and Randy have been my Christmas Star and joy during this year of self-doubt and reflection.

I share my sources of joy with you because I believe it is the people we bless our lives with who truly matter most; not the accumulation of things, but the sharing of joy, peace and love with others. May the Christmas season bring joy to each of you and may you each find the Christmas Star that shines brightest for you.

Peace and love next week...