

December 2009

Dear Clients and Friends:

This is the time of year to count our own blessings. Do you start by thinking about your health, your family, your home and personal finances? If we tried to put all of the good things we enjoy on the list, we'd never finish.

I met a young woman a couple of weeks ago whose life story gave me pause. Until age thirteen, she was normal in every way. Good in school, an excellent skier, she seemed to have everything going for her. Then one day, for no apparent reason, she suddenly felt disconnected and different from all the other kids she knew. Strange feelings came over her, with images and thoughts she couldn't control.

Whatever had changed in her brain has hijacked the intervening years. Now in her thirties, she is in and out of institutional care, receiving medications and electric shock therapy. She found it difficult to write down her name and phone number for me, forming characters of different sizes and shapes on the paper.

What is she doing with her life? For starters, she always has a smile on her face and a kind word to share. I discovered she's written three children's books and is planning a fourth. None of them may ever be published, but she doesn't care. Her only thought is to inspire others. This young woman counts her victories and ignores the losses.

I'm back to thinking about all I've been given in this life.

I hope your blessings are many. Best wishes to you and your family for the holidays!

Regards,



Charles M. Shackelford