

'Tis the Season for Angels



Christmas time is a great time for angels. Everyone loves angels they are non denominational and go across religious lines especially at the holiday season. Just as Valentine's day is a good time to buy heart items, Christmas is a time for angels.

Oriental trading company has the angel stickers (100 stickers for \$2.00) Buy enough for the whole year as you won't find them in July.

What could be more perfect than "Would you like a Guardian Angel?" I intend to use a lot of them for both children and adults.

When looking around for something about angels, I received an E-mail from Bud Frimoth of Portland, Oregon. He wrote that he and his wife Lenore visit the "Angels in Waiting" after making their clown rounds on the cardiac ward. I asked Bud about Angels in Waiting. His reply follows. -- *Shobi*

Angels in Waiting

*From Bud and Lenore Frimoth
a.k.a. Zyppurr and Wrinkle
of Portland, Oregon*

That's how some of the staff in the Providence Child Nursing Center describe their medically fragile children.

The Center is adjacent to the Portland Providence Hospital, so we go to the Center after we finish clowning at the cardiac ward in the hospital. The medically fragile children are those whose genes must have been mixed up at the time of conception and early development. They are severely afflicted with palsy-like symptoms. In earlier times they most likely would have been naturally aborted or would have died at birth. Today their lives are saved and through facilities like the Center, gentle care and nurturing take place. Most cannot walk, talk, see plainly, or comprehend much that is happening around them. In some ways they have autistic tendencies. They are really in another world. Occasionally you can drop into their world . . . empathically.

Their physical appearance caused lumps in our throats when we first visited. We wondered, "What can our clowns do to reach them?" Then with a soft "wheeze" of Zyppurr's siren whistle, the giggles burst forth. Wrinkles uses her feather duster as a screen behind which she can play "Peek-a-boo" with a youngster who offers as close to a belly laugh as possible. This response is particularly gratifying because the eyes of the children have difficulty in focusing on anything. But then charming, captivating smiles encompass their faces and we melt inside. In that brief moment our worlds come together.

Our hearts go out to their families who have placed their children in this live-in nursing center. We admire the staff,

both professional and volunteer, who share the children's company every day and night. There is little written about medically fragile children although it is a growing field. A national convention of M.F.C. Professionals met in Portland recently.

We think that the people who care for these children have had to see the children with different eyes . . . thus the term "Angels in Waiting." A smile here and a giggle there, but also a lot of crying for which there are few solutions -- yet the gentle caring never ceases.

The staff cares for them constantly, these growing bodies many of whom are still diapered. The children are kept clean and spoken to in gentle, affirming language. They are assured with soft touches as they are transported in wheel chairs from place to place. Many of these children won't make it through their teens.

In the Center the children range in age from one month to mid teens. Their beauty is discernible in momentary flashes of "Aha's." In their distorted faces and spastic appendages it's there -- even in the mildly responsive nonverbal actions of a blind child who holds a little bell that he can ring to music being played.

It makes you wonder what is God's plan for these children? Maybe that's why the workers and care givers consider them "Angels in Waiting." God has other plans for them, but in the meantime their needs draw out the most creative care giving ideas possible. We welcome the challenge and pray for openness in new dimensions we've not considered before.

Zyppurr and Wrinkle