The White Envelope

It’s just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas — oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it — overspending the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma — the gifts given in desperation because you couldn’t think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes.

As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler’s ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn’t acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, “I wish just one of them could have won,” he said. “They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them.”

Mike loved kids — all kids — and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That’s when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent the anonymously to the inner-city church.

On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years.

For each Christmas, I followed the tradition — one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn’t end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more.

Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope. Mike’s spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.

May we all remember the reason for the season, and the true Christmas spirit this year and always. God bless — pass this along to your friends and loved ones.

Happy Holidays！

December is one of my favorite months as it’s the month of lights, and the month of giving, and thanking. I received this mail from my friend Debra this evening, and wanted to share it. I really think it touches all of us in many ways. As it is said you can never give or receive too many mizvot (in Jewish it’s the act of giving) Maybe it could be your “WHITE ENVELOPE”.

白色的信封

卡在圣诞树枝上的只是一个很小的白色信封，没有姓名，没有身份，也没有留言。这封放在树枝上的信已经有10多年历史了。

事情的开始是由于丈夫迈克不喜欢圣诞节——哦，并不是真指圣诞节，而是它的商业化——超支了……为了给哈利叔叔买领带，给奶奶买爽身粉，他在圣诞来临之际跑这跑那——只能送这些礼物，因为根本也想不出别的东西。

有一年，我知道他也这么想，就决定不再像以往那样买衬衫、毛衣、领带之类的东西。我灵感突现，想为迈克准备一个特殊的礼物。

那年，儿子凯文12岁，正在学校里练习初级摔跤。就在圣诞节前，他们有一项非组织性的比赛要举行，他们的对手由市里一家教堂赞助。那些少年穿的运动鞋破旧不堪，好像脚上就剩下鞋带了。我们这边的孩子一律身着金蓝色的衣服和崭新的摔跤鞋，着装与和他们形成鲜明的对比。

比赛开始后，有人叫我去看看对方的情形，他们没有戴那种旨在保护摔跤选手耳朵的浅色护头。对他们这样的队伍来说那太奢侈了，很明显他们买不起。因此，最终我们队给了他们猛烈的打击，并且也打败了所有的举重班。那些男孩从垫子上站起来时，还故意穿着破旧的衣服，虚张声势地走来走去，带着一种不承认失败的街头傲慢。

迈克坐在我旁边，悲伤地摇着头，说：“我真希望他们能有人赢我们，他们很有潜力，但输得这么惨可能会使他们失去信心。”

迈克之所以会有这样的想法，是因为他喜欢小孩——所有的小孩他都喜欢——他了解他们，他曾经担任过一些小团队的教练，如：足球队、垒球队和长曲棍球队。一天下午，我去附近的一家体育用品店买了一套摔跤护头和鞋子，并匿名把东西送给市里的教堂。

圣诞节前夕，我把信封放在了圣诞树上，信的内容是告诉迈克我所做的事，就是我送给他的礼物。那年和接下来几年的圣诞节，他的笑容是最灿烂的事了。

每年圣诞节，我都遵循这样一个传统——有一年是让一些残障少年参加曲棍球比赛，还有一年是看望了两位老年兄弟，他们的房屋在圣诞节前被大火烧为平地，等等。

信封成为我们过圣诞节时最重要的事。圣诞节那天早上，信封总是最后一个被拆开 。孩子们也不顾他们的新玩具了，眼睛睁得大大的，站着那里等期待着爸爸把信封从圣诞树上摘下来，把里面的内容读给他们听。

孩子们长大后，他们都要有用的礼物而不再要玩具了，不过，信封的吸引力依然没变。故事并没有在此结束，去年迈克患上可怕的癌症离开我们了。圣诞节来临的时候，我们还沉浸在悲伤中，甚至都没有装饰圣诞树。在圣诞前夕，我在树上放了一封信，到了早上，信却变成了三封。

我们的每个孩子，都趁大家不注意的时候，在圣诞树上放了一封写给爸爸的信。这个惯例一直延续着，有一天我们的孙子也会站在圣诞树旁，眼睛睁得大大的，望着他们的爸爸取下信封。迈克的灵魂，就像圣诞节的精神一样，永远在我们身边。

愿我们都能牢记过这个节日的原因，永远记住真正的圣诞节精神。愿上帝保佑我们——把这篇文章也送给你的朋友和所爱的人。

节日快乐！

12月是我最喜欢的月份，因为它是快乐的月份，是给予和感恩的月份。这是我的朋友德布拉今晚发给我的邮件，想和大家一起分享。我确实认为它在很多方面都打动了我们，信上说你给予或者接受给予再多也不过分，或许它就是你的“白色信封”。