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The things we clip along the way

I'm a clipper. I clip from newspapers, magazines, flyers, mailings, anything that comes my way. I've been known to tear articles out of this-month-current magazines in doctors' offices (mea culpa). And although one doesn't exactly "clip" from a Web site, if I print out a piece and save it, I figure it's the same thing.

Right now, I have a pile of clippings that includes a recipe for pasta with zucchini and toasted almonds; getting a French manicure on the cheap (Sally Hansen's Salon French Manicure kit, \$13); developing a winning Web site; examining your conscience before confession (clearly I need this; see above), and how social networking is transforming business.

As you might imagine, a lot of these clippings are hard to categorize or file. Hence, clipping "piles" tend to accumulate around my home and office. Ask my husband.

Over the years, however, some clippings have found their way to a little file I call, "Deaths of Interest." The other day, I opened it and found stories that still break my heart, but also attest to the overwhelm-

ing compassion and perseverance of which the human spirit is capable.

A particularly moving one concerns Raymond Dunn, the so-called "Gerber Boy," who died in 1995 at the age of 20. According to the AP story, Dunn was "born with a broken skull and a brain that had been deprived of oxygen; he was not supposed to live a year. His twisted, cramped body never grew beyond 38 pounds and four feet. He suffered dozens of seizures a day, and slept two or three hours a night.

"He moved only with help, saw only shadows. His expression ranged from a painful grimace to a slight smile. His only sounds were snorts, gurgles and wheezes.

"His biggest problem was his allergy to virtually all food," except for one — MBF, for meat-based formula — which Gerber Foods stopped making in 1985.

"By 1988, Mrs. Dunn had hunted down every can she could find and Gerber had exhausted its backlog. The mother begged Gerber to make more.

"Finally, in 1990, the company agreed. Research division volunteers put their own projects on hold, hauled out old equipment

and devoted several days of production time and space to Raymond's MBF. They even had to go to Washington to get USDA approval for the label."

After Raymond's death, a Gerber nutritionist was asked why she and her colleagues devoted such effort to a market of one. "It seemed like the right thing to do," said Dr. Sandra Bartholmey.

Others were moved by Raymond's story, the article continues, including a Sunday school class that sent him \$28; a dealer in rare baseball cards who offered Raymond any card he wanted, and a man who informally adopted Raymond as his grandson.

"His mother and a platoon of helpers caressed him almost constantly. They fed him seven times a day and brushed his teeth after each feeding. They spent hours rolling him atop a big medicine ball in an attempt to strengthen his neck enough so he could hold his head up."

At his death, his mother said: "I'm proud he was my son. I'm grateful God gave me that honor. I wouldn't have traded it."

Mary might have said the same at the foot of the cross. Mrs. Dunn had her own cross to bear. She bore it with love and perseverance. And all those who lightened her load did so from generous hearts committed to "love thy neighbor."

Would I have done the same?



CYNTHIA STARKS

new view