

She was an outstanding artist and teacher<sup>1</sup> – but she was more: she was a giver, and along that line she was a toymaker that enjoyed making toys that children loved. She was a very mature woman, but she had a type of empathy with the kids that she taught. She understood what they liked, and loved to create the things that tickled their fancy and inspired their imagination. She took it as a mission to encourage creativity as a vital part of their own lives.

She used her ‘giving’ activities to try to teach basic principles of personal goodness as well as the importance of saving the planet by re-purposing recyclable materials. She stored large quantities of paper, plastic bottles, wire, foam, etc., so that she could create and build toys according to her powerful imagination. She painted them with attractive colors, blending and matching them beautifully. Her mastery of colors indicate that she is well-rounded in her acceptance of all manner of people. It reminds me of the song “Jesus loves all the little children ... red and yellow, black and white...” Most other people just don’t have all of the colors (the full spectrum) on their relationship palette.

One of her projects was to make large wax crayons of various creatures and symbols that the children were familiar with and loved from silicon [x] molds using broken pieces. A special example of her giving was to make these crayons for a small child that suffered from multiple sclerosis who could not hold the smaller regular crayons.

She used toys to win people over, as well. There was one boy in her class who was very hostile about school – not so much about her, but about school in general (and everything that went with it). She found out something about his interests, and one day found a gift that she felt he would enjoy. When she gave it to him, he was stunned that she, a teacher, had actually given him something. It changed his entire attitude about her and about people in general. And years later, when he had grown up and his son became a student, the father pointed out the teacher and told him that the gift had changed his life. She had the ability to turn people to her, and get the best out of them. She found ways to encourage and inspire them.

Helping children to make their own art was another type of gift. She had a basket of dolls that had been made from wooden pegs, each being dressed as a person or animal that the children could recognize. She would let the children choose whatever character that they wanted. One little girl, looking through the collection, found one that was just a bare peg with eyes and a mouth painted on. She called it a “naked” doll, and took it with the teacher’s encouragement to create her own character.

Many students that she taught about the need for creativity kept the things that they had made long after their school days. When she re-connected with them, they were proud to talk about their art and how they displayed them in their homes for years.

The teacher had always thought that being creative is a cure for many ills – and it was a powerful way in which to follow the Creator of all things!

1. This, of course, refers to my wife Soozie