

# Noticing Daily Wonders

Connecticut's poet laureate emeritus reflects on the hope that snow can bring.

By Dick Allen



Photo by Aaron Burden | <https://tricy.cl/2qo8RCM>

Dear Grandson Lincoln,

I once read of a cameraman who believed that nothing was quite so beautiful as scenes filmed through slowly falling snow.

Ever since, even in December's darkest days, I hope for such a snowfall. If it arrives, I put aside all troubles. I simply watch snow coming down.

I hope you'll forever do the same.

You'll need such ways of escape because you're growing up in these Internet and 24-hour-news cycle years of constant worry. Radical terrorists may come, you fear. Bombs may explode as you watch a marathon race or sit in a movie theatre or at a concert.

Yet I want to tell you, Lincoln, you can handle this. Your fears are not unique.

Soon, you'll enter kindergarten. When your grandmother entered kindergarten in a long-ago time of world war, a policeman came into her classroom. He fingerprinted all the children. After your 5-year-old (imagine that!) grandmother asked him why, he quietly answered, "If there's a bomb that hurts you, and you can't speak, you can be identified for your parents to take you home."

She dealt with it.

Lincoln, we plan our days, but our days have other plans. I won't lie to you. Things go bad. There are mean people. Flowers and candles can't protect you. So to take revenge against worry, it is important for you to do happy things, things adults too often forget.

You should exclaim over at least one thing each day. For instance, you might eat a chocolate cupcake with strawberry frosting and exclaim, "That's a really good cupcake!"

You might see a fire truck and exclaim, "I love fire trucks. And rescuing people!"

Or you could exclaim, just because it feels right, "I feel really good today!"

Song helps. December is a time for songs of grace and love and peace and praise and of looking forward to the

coming new year. Some, celebrating Hanukkah, sing, “A year went, a year is coming / I raise my hands; / A good year to you. . . .” Christians sing “God bless ye merry, gentlemen / Let nothing you dismay. / Remember Christ, our Saviour / Was born on Christmas day.” Many Muslims soon will quietly celebrate Milad un Nabi, the birthday of Muhammad. They will sing songs in his praise and of praise for love and peace.

And now, I’m also thinking of the Dalai Lama, that wonderful man who is such a mixture of holiness and silliness—as might we all be. When asked, “What is the meaning of life?” he answered, “The meaning of life is happiness.”

Then he added, in still-broken English, “What make happiness? Money? Big house? Accomplishment? Friends? ... Or compassion and a good heart? This is a question all human beings must try to answer.”

Lincoln, as you answer, I hope you’ll remember a saying that has always helped me: There is no such thing as a perfect day. Once you give up expecting everything to be perfectly all right from dawn to dusk, you might learn to accept the day for what it is.

What else would I wish for you?

Because I’m a poet, I sure hope you never abandon reading poems.

My favourite poem by Robert Frost contains these lines:

“... though there is no fixed line between wrong and right / There are roughly zones whose laws must be obeyed.” It’s a wonderful way to remember how to get along with others. Do not scorn compromise.

You will grow up into a world where, more than ever before in Earth's history, you must be a guardian of the planet's environment. Our state's great poet Wallace Stevens wrote, "Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail / Whistle about us their spontaneous cries; / Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness. . . ." Our planet and the life upon it must be protected. It is your sacred duty. You are the guardian of the deer and the quail and even of the tiniest of berries.

Yet, that said, hey Lincoln, lighten up. You can set worry aside much of the time. And you should.

To be alive in December at your age of 4 or at mine at 76, is to be in full play with mystery and beauty and love. You live on a very strange little speck of rock in a very remote corner of the universe. Cherish it. It is your responsibility to gaze up with wonder and awe at all the stars above your little town of Wallingford. It is your duty to eat Cheerios, to sled down snowy hills, to drink hot chocolate and to look at books about defunct dinosaurs. It is your responsibility to hold your parents' hands, and your friends' hands, and to hold your grandparents' hands just as we hold yours.

When not doing this, you should lie on your back in the snow. Fan your arms and legs. Traced out of yourself, Lincoln, may you leave snow angels here.

Love,

Granddad

Dick Allen (1939-2017) was the Connecticut State Poet Laureate from 2010 to 2015. His ninth poetry collection,

Zen Master Poems, was published by Wisdom Publications in 2016.