

## "Always remember, that there are other worlds to sing in"

Written by Andy Owen



I came across this story quite a while ago, but never seemed to have time to write it up, or other stories pushed their way in front of it.

It's a true story. A lovely tale.

It has a really important message that we should all heed a bit more. And it's quite relevant right now, in these worrying pandemic times.

I thought the time might be right to write it up and share it with you.

The telephone on the wall in the house was, of course, mainly an American thing. We didn't have it over here - well, most of us didn't, anyhow.

Our first home phones were big black bakelite jobs that sat on a table, mainly in the hall. Colours came later.



After that, I called "Information Please" for *everything*.

I asked her for help with my geography and she told me where Philadelphia was.

She helped me with my maths.

She told me my pet chipmunk that I had caught in the park just the day before, would eat fruit and nuts.

Then, there was the time Petey, our pet canary, died. I called, "Information Please," and told her the sad story.

She listened, and then said things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was not consoled.

I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, "Wayne, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in."

Somehow, that made me feel so much better.

Another day I was on the telephone, "Information Please."

"Information," said in the now familiar voice. "How do I spell fix?" I asked.

All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest.

But, when I was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston.

I missed my friend very much.

"Information Please" belonged in that shiny phone back home.

I never thought of trying the similar shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall.

As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversations never really left me. Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity, I would recall the serene sense of security I had then.

I started to appreciate how patient, understanding and kind she was, to have spent her time on a little boy like me.

A few years later, while travelling west going to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about a half-hour or so between planes.

I spent 15 minutes or so on the phone with my sister, who lived there now. Then without thinking what I was doing, I dialled my old hometown operator and said, "Information Please."

Miraculously, I heard the small, clear voice I knew so well.

"Information."

I hadn't planned this, but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause.

Then came the soft spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now."

I laughed, "So it's really you," I said.

"I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

"I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your calls meant to me. I never had any children and I used to look forward to your calls."

I told her how often I had thought of her over the years and I asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister.

"Please do," she said. "Just ask for Sally."

Three months later, I was back in Seattle.

A different voice answered, "Information."

I asked for Sally.

"Are you a friend?" she said.

"Yes, a very old friend," I answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but Sally had been working part time the last few years, because she was sick.

She died five weeks ago."

Before I could hang up, she said, "Wait a minute, did you say your name was Wayne?"

"Yes." I answered.

"Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you ever called. Hang on while I find it. Yes, here it is. Let me read it to you.

The note says, "Tell him there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

I thanked her and hung up.

I knew *exactly* what Sally meant.

Never underestimate the impression you may make on others.

Have you touched a life today?