

Goss

November 1, 2003

Princess Farrah and the Golden Balloon

By Estelle

Princess Farrah awoke with excitement. 'I'm so excited! I'm so excited!' she squealed. The morning was fair, but crisp; and the blue sky was dotted with white cotton clouds. Today was a very special day. Jordan, Princess of Golf Course Estate had invited Farrah, Princess of Hunter's Hill to her princess birthday party.

Princess Farrah bathed in her alabaster tub and washed her long, gold tresses. She donned her prettiest velvet and chiffon gown, in shimmering shades of lilac and lavender.

Then she rode out to the village market place, in search of the perfect royal gift. She looked high and low; until her gaze rested upon a tiny mermaid, exquisitely wrought. Everyone knows how Princess Farrah *loves* mermaids!

Carefully she made her way back to the castle, keeping the precious merchandise close to her heart. She wrapped it lovingly in fine paper, and adorned it with ribbon of satin and gold.

The scroll was decorated with a fair maiden, illuminated in hues of argent and rose. The quill flew as she inscribed her message, pausing occasionally to dip it in the well of ink.

And this is what she wrote:

I hope you have a fantappy birthday and a great Christmas.



When it had been blotted, and sealed by her own hand, she rested from her exertions.

Suddenly she noticed a shiny golden balloon. She put it to her lips and blew until it grew bigger and bigger and bigger! It was magnificent! And then, for the first time *ever*, Princess Farrah tied up her own balloon!

A beautiful angel came strolling towards her through a tunnel of light. He was as brilliant and blinding as a thousand diamonds. 'This is your reward for being sweet and kind,' he told her, and disappeared.





The Family This Week

Estelle:

'Tis the season to be social! Estelle has had the *best* week.

On Saturday, Estelle, Lisa and Nathan from the Russia team went to Restaurant 86 to celebrate Marie Chauveau's engagement. They caught up with Renee and Simon, also from the Russia team, and enjoyed being part of her special night. Everyone was happy, and they laughed all the way home.

On Tuesday, Greg took the day off and they spent the morning together at Scarlett's school. Then they went out to lunch and came home to watch the Melbourne Cup. Greg found an old bottle of sparkling grape juice in the back of the refrigerator and they celebrated together.

On Wednesday, Estelle met two of her girlfriends from primary school for lunch. Their other friend, Debbie, is still in America. They dined *alfresco* at the Sage Café at Gorman House and enjoyed 2 hours of good food and good company. Estelle thrilled them all with her Russia photos.

Greg:



Has anyone ever had the misfortune to supervise a junior who is not just incompetent, unproductive and insubordinate; but downright vindictive and malevolent?

Such people are virtually unsackable in view of today's unfair dismissal laws. One needs to prove that *his* poor performance isn't *your* fault.

This is a situation in which Greg has found himself at work during the past year or so.

What needed to be done was to clearly show; on a cold, hard, rational basis; exactly how non-productive this person was, without the slightest taint of opinion.

Shouldn't be too hard? Bear in mind the organisation concerned is contracted to provide 37.5 hours a week. Simply being there (and surfing the net) meets the terms of the contract. No productivity is specified, and nothing exists to measure it.

There *had* to be a way. Then, on Sunday, whilst driving to the shops; Greg had a brilliant idea! It was simple. It was elegant. It was broadly applicable to anything, anytime, anywhere.

A careful analysis of the person's work showed that the few tasks done were all minor, and half of them were incomplete; a contribution which, when expressed as a percentage of work time, came to **1.6%**.

It was encouraging to finally have a tangible measure of performance.

Farrah:

Farrah's class have been looking at 'celebrations' as the theme for this term; and the children were required to present a news item to the class on a particular celebration such as an engagement, a wedding, a baptism, a birthday, Easter, Christmas or New Year.

Farrah chose 'Christmas' as her topic, and she decided on a poster presentation to accompany her talk.

She wrote a few pages about our family Christmas and stuck them onto the cardboard; and then we decorated it with family photos, Christmas card pictures, old decorations and sparkly gold tinsel. We thought it was beautiful!

Mrs Heyward liked it too, and she was especially interested when Farrah showed the class some Christmas cards that we had made ourselves. Some of the ornaments fell off, and Farrah begged Mrs Heyward to fix her poster; so she did.



On Tuesday, Farrah wanted a sugar sandwich for lunch. Estelle and Greg said it was alright just this once because it was a special day, and she could have one again next year. Farrah's friend Udit really wanted the sugar sandwich, but Farrah said, "No! This is my Melbourne Cup Sandwich".

When she got home, Farrah made a butterfly out of a cork. Estelle was impressed. She hoped that when Farrah grew up she would 'make things'. Farrah replied that when she grows up she is going to be an artist.

On Wednesday, Farrah decided she would like to go on a rocket to the moon to see if she could see Neil Armstrong's flag. But how would she know which one was Neil Armstrong's? It might be all tattered since it was like a hundred years ago. Estelle told her she watched the moon landing on television when she was a little girl and it was definitely *not* 100 years ago. Was Neil Armstrong still alive? How old was he when he went in the rocket? Estelle did not know.

Scarlett:



On Sunday, Scarlett discovered the existence of her funky electronic piano; and proceeded to regale us with hours of recitals and concertos. *Bravissimo!*

On Monday, Scarlett heard the story of 'The Very Busy Spider.' Then she made a spider's web out of wool and contact; and another out of cooked spaghetti. Scarlett liked the cooked spaghetti best of all. Then she enjoyed a lovely hand massage from Jenny and Lyn; who are now planning to "Scarlett-proof" the room, since Scarlett has become so active and curious!



On Tuesday, Greg gave Scarlett a drink of sparkling grape juice to celebrate Melbourne Cup Day. Scarlett was *not* impressed.

Estelle's Editorial

One thing I have come to realise is that not all special schools are necessarily created equal, and the same can be said for Special Ed teachers.

For instance, I know a little boy of Scarlett's age who goes to Malkara; the special school for the south side of Canberra. At times he is left to wander the corridors in his walker completely unsupervised, and on one occasion his mother arrived to collect him from school and found he had been forgotten and left out in the sand pit. Incidents such as these are reminiscent of 1940's institutions, and would *never* happen at Cranleigh.

It is hard to describe the optimism and hope fostered at that school; not so much that our special children will be the same as others, but that they can lead happy lives in an atmosphere of warmth and respect. Educators come from all around the world to learn from what has been achieved at Cranleigh.

As with any organisation, the tone is set by the leader; in this case the principal, Mike Sainsbery. I have seen him come in over the holidays to build the Sensory Garden for the children; and do every conceivable kind of odd job that you would never expect from a principal.

Mike is retiring next year, and I think everybody hopes that the mark he has left on the school will be indelible. The staff tend to feel he has made a wise decision, as he is a self-confessed workaholic; but he will certainly leave behind a big pair of shoes to fill.

I am very sorry to see Mike go; but an even worse loss for me will be that of Scarlett's teacher, Jenny Woodham.

Special Ed teachers are hard to come by. Firstly, it is a highly specialised area of education; and secondly, it takes a very special kind of person to do it. To do it well is even harder.

I have spent a year watching Jenny loving kids that most people can't even look in the eye. I have seen their smiling faces and bright eyes enjoying activities that nobody else would have ever dreamed of. No kid ever enjoyed school more than these kids do, and no kid ever woke up more excited to go. The work is demanding both physically and emotionally. There are medical and behavioural issues to manage. Some little people even pass away.

Isn't it wonderful that people like Mike and Jenny exist? What an incredible gift they bring to the world. I have been so privileged to know them.



Upcoming Events

- Mon 10 Nov 7:30pm – Estelle to attend Creative Moments class with Jenny Garrard
- Tue 11 Nov – Wildcare to visit Scarlett's school
- Wed 12 Nov 7:00pm – Dinner with Chris and Deborah Horscroft
- Thu 13 Nov 9:45am – Estelle and Scarlett to meet physiotherapist Jill Krieg at Cranleigh for a demonstration of the Kaye Walker
- Fri 14 Nov 3:00pm – Greg to sit PRINCE2 Foundation Exam at the Brassey Hotel, Barton
- Fri 14 Nov 5:30pm – Foundation Day at Farrah's school
- Sat 15 Nov 4:00pm – 6:00pm – Farrah to attend Taylor Eggleton's Disco Party
- Mon 17 Nov – F.A.R.M. visit at Scarlett's school
- Fri 21 Nov 7:30pm – 9:00pm – Farrah to attend the School Disco
- Sat 22 Nov 1:00pm – Farrah to attend Callum Jones' Bowling Birthday Party
- Sun 23 Nov 1:00pm – Ronald McDonald's Magic Show
- Sat 29 Nov – Jenny Shaw's 40th birthday party
- Sat 6 Dec 10:30am – 2:00pm – Scarlett to attend Special Children's Christmas Party
- Mon 8 Dec 1:00pm – 4:30pm – Greg to sit PRINCE2 Practitioners Exam
- Wed 11 Dec – Carols Night at Farrah's school
- Tue 23 Dec – Kristin's 21st birthday
- Tue 23 Dec – Estelle and Greg to rendezvous with former dance teacher Jason and partner Zoë from Brisbane
- Wed 24 Dec – Christmas Eve
- Thu 25 Dec – Christmas Day

The Last Word

By Greg

Well, it has been another busy week. We also managed to catch up with Rhys and Owen Howitt which was nice. Farrah and Owen were off picking lemons whilst the grown-ups had coffee.

Work has been chaos with most of my staff assigned fulltime to external projects and scattered over four different areas – the sort of thing that destroys the cohesiveness of the team. It is hard enough to put an effort into long term improvements (given that one is not planning on being there to see them through) without senior management pulling what was there, apart. I know we all do it, but it makes one wonder about the trade-offs involved in solving short term problems by whatever means are necessary.

Moonlighting. The work for Ian finally passed testing and, hopefully, will acquit itself well in the live environment. The software is mainly to find out what happens when a radio despatch network fails. If we're lucky I'll have guessed all of the details correctly and the software will automatically switch to a spare system. But the expectation is mainly that it will note what happens, for the next version to handle. This has chewed up a lot of my evenings (and early mornings) over the last week.

I am optimistic about the impending Prince2 exam despite needing to put the evenings (and wee small hours of the morn) back into doing some study. There's a few days yet. I'll let you all know how I go.



Favourite websites:

- www.au.mensa.org
- www.abbasite.com
- www.dame-edna.com
- www.basilbrush.com
- www.seussville.com
- www.snoopy.com