

# Your Own Two Cents

by Docia Zavitkovsky

In a note from Gay Macdonald, executive director, UCLA Early Care and Education, there was a drawing of a hand on which two pennies were pasted and the following words:

"I wanted to give you a present. At first I couldn't think of what to give you. Then I thought of giving you a story. Even though you have so many stories, I know you will always want to have one more good one . . . I know you are a person who likes her own 2 cents. So here you go. Happy Birthday. — Gay"

Gay's story:

One day five-year-old Ana came into my office. She was holding out her hand, showing me something. "What's this?" she asked. I looked. "Two pennies?" I asked. "Yes, but what is it?" she asked. "Money," I tried. "Yes, but what is it?" she persisted. "I think you'd better tell me." "It's 2 cents." "Yes, it certainly is," I agreed. "It's yours. It's your present." "Oh! Thank you!" "How did you think of giving it to me?" "I wanted to give you a present. I thought, 'Everybody wants their own 2 cents.' So here you go. It's your own 2 cents."

I was touched by Ana's story and by Gay sharing it with me. It brought back the memory of one of Alice Lee Humphrey's stories in her book *Heaven in My Hand*, where a teacher

hears footsteps outside her door as she is telling another teacher that she has "an ache and a pain plus a hurtin' all over." The following day a child in her class came up to her and "slowly opened one grimy hand as though he handled a diamond. And there within the moist, dirty little palm lay what had lately been a chocolate covered pill. Save that now the brown coating had melted, revealing a pellet of billious hue."

When she tried to thank him, the little boy told her she didn't need to thank him, that "it be for thy hurtin' all over." She realized that it had probably been his footsteps they had heard, and it also came to her that "those seven small words made the pill more valuable than costly gifts. And she marvelled that so often the outward covering of a gift gave so little hint of the wealth of love and solicitude.

Young children are wonderful teachers. We are so lucky to be the recipients of their wisdom when we take the time to listen to what they have to say.

Docia Zavitkovsky has furthered the cause of young children as a practitioner in the field for over 50 years and as past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Known far and wide for her storytelling, she has traveled extensively as an early childhood consultant, lecturer, and adventurer.



PHOTO BY JEAN BERLEIN