

In These Days of Mostly Darkness There are
Moments when the Clouds Part, the Sun
Winks and a Rainbow Appears, Briefly

#2

It's a modest, two story, wood frame house, probably built in the '20's. It takes a nice photo.

"Jim, can I talk to you for a minute."

Robby was sitting in a chair outside my office, when I arrived that morning after missing a week with the flu.

"No really, I just want two minutes of your time."

He must have seen or felt me flinch, the result of trying to sort through how to line up the day.

I made a course correction.

"Yeah, come in man, how ya doin'?"

I sit. Robby doesn't, ignoring my motion to join me, instead he climbs a pulpit. I can tell he's prepared and rehearsed his remarks.

The photo shows a front bow window, a concrete walkway to the front door and siding - yellow with dark green shutters - one of my favorite color combinations.

"Jim, ten years ago I was staying at the PDPR (post detox, pre recovery) program, you know, on Hollis St. I was there for a year and a half. Then I moved into Sober Housing for more than four years. Today I'm a homeowner. It's all because of SMOC. I just wanted to thank you."

The image of a 45 year old Robby sitting on the corner of his bed in a dormitory room trying to figure out how to get his life back together that passes through my mind is a powerful one, rendering me momentarily speechless.

I again gesture to Robby that he should sit with me.

"Man, that's wonderful. Tell me about it."

It's a foreclosure, it took time and a lot of energy to get it done. Robby succeeded.

"Have you got a picture?"

His cellphone appears, 10 seconds later he passes it to me with the house teed up on the screen.

"What a cool house, fantastic man, can you email me this. I want to put it upon my door," gesturing to the oak door, "It can join the others (photos), will give it a place of honor."

"I'll have my girlfriend Lori send it, you know her, she wants to thank you too. She'll call you. You helped her too."

Robby then proceeds to tell me that I'd helped Lori get into Serenity House a while back. She's now working as an executive secretary in a job similar to the one she held before running into trouble.

"I'm so happy for you guys. Fantastic."

One can and should be only a bit player in another's road to redemption.

Sure enough, later in the day, the house picture and thank you arrive via email from Lori. Another image appears in my mind's eye: A few months from now, high summer, Independence Day, Lori and Robby have hung the stars and stripes in the currently empty flag holder that can be spotted in the photo on one of the front entrance pillars. They're sitting in the back by the firepit as

dusk turns to darkness and fireworks appear in the night sky.
Celebrating their own independence.

That is the vision of America I believe in.

Jim Cuddy
March, 2018