

A Man Named Anthony Robinson

by

Mark Levison

I live in a big house on a little hill. I have a swimming pool and three daughters. As a result, my house is filled with lots of teenage girls and therefore, lots of teenage boys. Last week, one of those boys thrilled the assembled masses by laying forty feet of rubber on my driveway. There was a time when I liked doing that, but it didn't amuse me this time. Sensing my disapproval, my daughters were quick to tell me they felt that type of behavior was very immature.

About 10:00 p.m. that evening, the doorbell rang. It wasn't the young fellow coming back to apologize. My 17-year old and one of her girlfriends said to me, in their bothered, disinterested way, "There's some stranger at the door. It must be for you."

I walked toward the entrance hall and I found a man standing in the living room. The unfamiliar face was as far from a spoiled, suburban teen as one could get. He was thin, but taller than me. He wore an ill-fitting sports coat, a wrinkled, dull white shirt, and a thin tie. He was an African-American.

Having a strange man in my house, after dark, without my permission, was a little disconcerting. I walked up to him, wondering why he was there. He told me he was selling magazine subscriptions. I was skeptical. Besides, I don't have any time to read magazines. I didn't say anything, but somehow he perceived my negative attitude. He looked down a little. "Hey, man," he said, "I'm 43 years old, having to do this kind of thing." His single sentence hit hard and altered my view of the stranger in my house. The impression of a troublesome intruder/salesman disappeared. It was replaced by the image of a humble man, who was probably working two jobs, and had the courage to knock on doors after dark, in a strange neighborhood where he may have believed he was not very welcome. I saw him more clearly then. His name is Anthony Robinson. I asked to see the list of magazines, and I bought one. Later, I wondered if there was something else I could have seen, or something else I should have done.

My father is a guy who finds living life easy. It usually entertains him, and when telling a funny story, which he does all the time, he often laughs so hard tears come to his eyes. He sends me four or five emails everyday. Sometimes they are political, but usually they are funny or inspirational.

My 17-year old, Lila - - the one who lets everybody in the house - - has a terrible time getting up in the morning. It's hard to even talk to her before noon. I've had two 17-year olds prior to her, so this is not news to me. Anyway, I recently gave Lila one of my dad's emails. It talked about being thankful when we get up in the morning if we can see, because others can't, and if we can hear, because other can't, etc. I thought I'd get one of "those looks" and she would quickly throw it away.

Kids have a way of surprising us. She retyped the email, in a large font, and hung it in her room. One of the lines suggested that when we wake up we should be thankful that we have a job, because there are other people who don't. I recall a Tom Paxton song titled, "Give me a job of work to do". Some of the words are, "The government man, he says its fine, to go on down to the free food line. It's nice of the government to be so fair, but I don't want my friends to see me there. Lord, give me a job of work to do. That's all I want, that's all I ask of you."

Anthony Robinson's job may not have been a satisfying one to him. It didn't sound like he thought it was a monumental challenge, or God's work. Yet, it was a job, and he was working hard at it, for his family or himself, or both. These days, one of the favorite pastimes of many lawyers is complaining about their job. Before we complain, we ought to think more about some of the other jobs we could be doing, or about those who don't have a job to do at all. If lawyers or other professionals really don't like their jobs, their training and experience allows them to find other work. For myself, I think being a lawyer is a very fortunate job. It's stimulating, challenging, allows for creativity, allows us to help others, and allows us to live in some pretty big houses - - which sometimes attract what we too often view as only bothersome door-to-door salesmen.

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