

Abundance and Gratitude

It is the season of Thanksgiving, and the recent devastation of Superstorm Sandy has brought home to me and my family how much we have to be thankful for. I have a form of survivors' guilt since I suffered no damage, not even a power outage. I have watched in awe as my friends have mobilized to volunteer their time and energy to help, to raise money and to distribute needed supplies. Author, Broadway star and fantasy baseball also-ran Hunter Foster and his wife AEA Councillor Jen "though she be but little, she is fierce" Cody created www.facebook.com/RizzoRelief [Grease's Rizzo disliked Sandy], raising lots of money and making many trips to the brutalized areas of Staten Island. The Actors Fund was working round the clock to aid our members and other entertainment professionals, not only with financial support but with help in navigating the FEMA bureaucracy.

These times of crisis bring out the best in us; we see others who are suffering or in need and we leap to help – it is one of our noblest attributes. I have made my own modest financial contributions; but for me once the crisis is past, I generally go back to my Nick-centered world. Oh sure, I pull out the charity solicitations in December and pick a few worthy causes to give some dollars to, but for most of the year charity begins and ends at home. I am resolving to be less stingy and I invite you to join me.

First let's make a Gratitude List: all the things we might be thankful for. For me, my wife, my kids, my health, my friends, my family, my acting jobs, the roof over my head, the opportunity to serve my fellow members and the industry – the list goes on and on. I am very, very fortunate; I have so much to be thankful for. When I focus on all I have been given, I am no longer fearful, neurotic, needy Mr. Scarcity – I am confident, other-oriented, generous Mr. Abundant. That's who I want to be in my marriage, in my career, in my life.

Not to be overly New-Age-y, but I put it to you that my success, my "luckiness" (cf. "Make Your Own Luck") is due to my attitude. I am generally Mr. Abundant; I expect to succeed. I encourage you to look at your gratitude list, at all you have, at all you are, at all you have achieved – and sail into that next audition or interview and nail it.

I also encourage you, out of your gratitude and your abundance, to give to those less fortunate. Specifically for Superstorm Sandy, options include the Actors Fund, American Red Cross, AmeriCares, Kids In Distressed Situations, Salvation Army, Save the Children, United Way, and World Vision. These organizations are worthy of your support at any time; and I encourage you in your holiday gift-giving, particularly for those tough-to-buy-for individuals, to consider – instead of a novelty iPhone case -- making a donation in their name to one of these charities.

Another option is to give them choice in the matter by giving them "The Good Card" from NetworkForGood.org, which is like a giving certificate to their choice of charity. And lastly, at this time of family and gratitude, I encourage you to expand your definition of your family to include your fellow theater folk and give to the Actors' Fund: a \$25 membership makes a splendid present to all of us.

I wish you, as a member of my Equity family, the happiest of holidays and a 2013 – our Centennial Year! – full of Abundance and Gratitude.