

## Brandon Prays For A Bike

Once Upon A Time  
(I think it was three weeks or maybe more)  
A young boy stood, staring through the window  
Of Uncle Sam's Super Discount Store.

Where the merchandise is packed and stacked  
From the ceiling to the Floor,  
And their sign reads "Everything you could possibly need  
And perhaps a whole lot more".

The child staring through the window,  
Was young Brandon McPickle  
And this story is about the prayer he prayed  
For a brand new bicycle.

It was on an afternoon, like most others,  
That the whole thing got started.  
He had just finished his homework and his chores  
Then hopped on his bike and he departed.

He pedaled through the quiet town of Snellville  
With his faithful pooch, named Sally,  
Which is in the shadow of Mt. Lumpitybump,  
Nestled down in Snurdley Valley.

Every evening after school,  
Accompanied by his noble pup,  
He would ride to Mt. Lumpitybump  
And then pedal....All the way up.

Sally always answered his question,  
Even before he had to ask it.  
She would run out to his bicycle  
And jump up in the basket.

Then he would daydream about his "secret place"  
As he strapped ol' Sally in...  
And how he loved to coast on the way back down  
Flying faster than the wind.

Mt. Lumpitybump always had new things to see  
Everyday, a new surprise,  
His Dad said you could see things there  
Scarcely seen by other human eyes.

‘The mountain paths’ said his father,  
“Were for more than just for riding.  
The treetops were just perfect  
For certain birds types to go hiding”.

Because, the mountain paths were too narrow  
For a truck or van or car.  
You could drive up to the halfway point  
But after that, you wouldn’t get too far.

The mountaintop had three steep peaks  
Which formed a giant rut.  
That’s the reason why the forest there  
For years remained uncut.

And so it came to be a nesting place  
For the rarest types of birds,  
And the ones who lived on Lumpitybump  
Were unique and really quite absurd.

Everyday, with binoculars,  
Brandon would scan and he would look...  
Then he would check each bird off  
In his ‘Birdwatchers Book’.

He hoped he would discover  
An unknown type or variety.  
And maybe get an award  
From the National Bird Watchers Society.’

He thought that the birds on Lumpitybump  
Had been, by ornithologists, overlooked  
Because he saw some, that weren’t even listed  
In his Birdwatchers Book.

(By the way ‘ornithologist’ is just one of  
Those big fancy words  
It means: someone who actually gets paid  
For going around watching birds).

Brandon remembered his first day out  
He saw nine grommlets and two wozles  
And the three-story nest  
Of the ‘Great Horn-Beaked Kazoozal.’

The Great Horn Beaked Kazoozal,  
As every bird-watcher knows,  
Plays his horn as he flies  
While changing notes with his toes.

After that he saw a Gobble Dee Gander  
With his mate - a Gobble Dee Goose,  
Who love to stand on their heads  
Way up high in their roosts.

The blood rushes down  
From their feet to their head.  
Then their eyes start to bug-out.  
And their faces turn red.

If that is their way of sitting,  
I would not want to employ it.  
But I don't think they're in pain  
In fact, they seem to enjoy it.

Then there was a pair  
of two-toed Blue-Hued Drangoo...  
It's rare to see only one,  
They usually fly two by two.

They will search, from their youth  
To find that one 'Life-Long Mate'  
And when finally they find them  
They never again separate.

The secret of their togetherness  
Is contained in their toes  
(Which might be a good tip  
For other species, I suppose)

They always fly hooked together...  
With their toes intertwined,  
Which looks like they're stuck  
With an invisible glue, of some kind.

It's not really that bad  
Until they start tending their nests...  
Each one works twice as hard  
While the other one rests.

Then he saw a gaggle  
Of hacking 'Gackwhackers'  
Whose throats get real sore  
From eating too many crackers...

They smell so terrible  
As they cough and they wheeze  
Cuz' they all eat their crackers  
Smear'd with Limburger cheese.

Then he spotted the most mischievous  
Of all birds - of them all!  
Like Black Rockets, from the sky,  
On the unsuspecting they fall.

Though they never actually harm you  
These speckle-faced grackle  
They dive-bomb you---just to scare you...  
Then they howl and they cackle.

And as they're rolling in laughter  
In the boughs of the trees  
Sometimes they fall out, unaware,  
And they skin up their knees.

Daydreaming back to those times  
Felt so warm and so pleasant...  
But that thing in the window  
Forced him back into the present.

He stared through the glass  
Amazed...and dazed and half-crazed.  
He stared for a long time,  
Which I'm sure seemed like days.

In the window was a bike  
Like no other he'd seen  
It was neat, It was sharp  
It was cool, It was keen.

It was great! It was magnificent!  
It was sleek, It was fine!  
It was the Star Blaster  
Five Thousand Three Hundred & Nine!

He thought, "Those rich kids have a pair..."  
Kevin, and Lucinda Van Drew;  
No, wait, they have the Star Blaster  
Five Thousand Three Hundred & Two!

I'll never forget the day they got them,  
It was in July or in May.  
And then they released a new model  
On the very next day.

They were so disappointed  
Poor ol' Lucinda and Kevin  
But Star Blaster just kept putting out new ones...  
I think at least seven.

It was hard to keep up  
With every model number and letter;  
But he knew that the Star Blaster folks  
Made each new one a little bit better.

'How in the world,' he asked himself,  
Can I make that bike mine?"  
The sign said 'This is absolutely the last one  
In the Star Blaster line.'

Because the Star Blaster factory  
Is locking its door.  
They are going out of business;  
There won't be any more.

Then Brandon looked down at this own bike.  
It had outlived its use.  
From many trips down Mt Lumpitybump,  
And many days of abuse.

The tires were smooth,  
The brakes nearly worn,  
The paint kinda scratched,  
And the seat, it was torn.

He looked back, through the window,  
For one goodbye glance,  
But he could not move away...  
He stood, caught in a trance.

The Star Blaster had headlights and brake lights  
And turn signals too.  
On the right they were yellow,  
On the left they were blue.

It had big, knobby tires  
For climbing ditches and mounds.  
And an electronic Ray Gun  
With five different sounds.

Under the seat, was a pouch  
For carrying things.  
And there were fins on the back  
That looked just like jet-wings.

The handlebars were swept back,  
For your comfort and ease,  
While the handles had streamers  
That flapped in the breeze, and  
A dispenser with tissues,  
That popped out when you sneezed.

It had mud flaps with light sensing  
Reflective type shiners,  
And a long padded seat  
Just like Dad's old recliner.

Near the front was a cooler  
To keep your soft drinks on ice.  
And for safety's sake  
An air-bag-inflation-device.

At the center was a tiny safe  
With a lock and a door,  
And some buttons and knobs  
But it's not clear what they're for.

There were gauges on the instrument panel  
And switches and a compass,  
And a bumper... he told Sally  
On each end. If they bump us.

It had a siren with lights  
That would blare and would blink  
And there were even...  
Two working rockets, I think!

And the heavy-dutiest shock absorbers  
For absorbing the shocks...  
Plus a waterproof compartment  
For a spare pair of socks.

There was a rod and a reel  
In case you wanted to fish.  
Not to mention a built-in TV  
With a satellite dish.

‘Gee,’ he thought ‘I believe  
They could’ve left off that part...  
‘Cuz riding and watching TV  
Ain’t that smart!’

It was all automatic,  
Not a single think manual,  
Including the dog-seat  
For Sally, his cocker-spaniel

Because comfort was so important  
To the ‘Star Blaster Tradition’  
The seat automatically adjusted  
To the most relaxing position.

His mind boggled, as he counted  
Each feature and item  
And the list seemed to stretch on  
Ad infinitum.

This model was the last;  
There would be no more;  
Read the sign in the window  
Of Uncle Sam’s Super Discount Store.

But then a lady in the window  
Setting up the display  
Put a tape in the player  
And pushed the button marked “Play”.

A man appeared outta focus,  
On a big video screen...  
His hair was too purple  
And his eyes were too green.

Brandon listened to the video guy  
Going into his spiel  
While his head began spinning  
Like a bicycle wheel.

“What a Great Bike!!” He said,  
“This is the ultimate machine!  
It’s our final answer  
To every bike rider’s dream!”

It’s a beautiful thing,  
It’s a thing to be treasured!  
A mechanical marvel!  
Way-Way-Beyond Measure!

So, while supplies last  
You’d better make up your mind...  
Don’t get passed by  
As you did the last time.

Do what ever you must,  
Even beg, plead, or whine  
To get a Star Blaster  
Five-Thousand Three Hundred & Nine.

How much, you ask, for this  
Star Blaster Five-Thousand Three Hundred & Nine?  
Why, just six easy payments...  
Of ninety-nine, ninety-nine.

But if you buy it now,  
And you don’t delay,  
(We are running a ‘Special’  
But it’s just for today).

We’re gonna cut that price down!  
And I guess we’ll survive  
For a limited time only,  
You can just pay us Five...

That’s right! Just five easy payments  
But you’ve gotta act fast.  
You’ve gotta act quickly,  
For this offer can’t last.”

The TV went blank  
For about ten seconds, and then...  
The man on the screen  
Started all over again.

Brandon thought "Wow, just five easy payments  
That is hard to believe...  
Then he hopped on his bike  
And proceeded to leave.

In his brain he re-played  
He what the man had been saying.  
Then he knew what to do;  
So he started in praying.

"Please, listen to me Lord,  
Please hear what I have to say...  
It seems like, its just when I *want* something  
That I take time to pray...  
But I really need that bike  
In such a bad way.  
And so, if it's alright with You  
And You say it's okay,  
And if it's not too much trouble  
I would like to get it today, Amen...

PS If You decide today is too soon,  
And I know that You might  
If I can't have it today  
Then how about tonight? Amen again.

He had prayed while he thought  
And he thought while he pedaled  
And then a thought came to him  
That left him unsettled

He had to work around  
The two problems that he had  
On the one hand was... his Mother  
On the other, his Dad.

"What if I go home,  
And shout, stomp, and stew...  
And sit in my room  
Holding my breath till I'm blue?

“Nah, that wouldn’t work...  
I’d be risking my skin;  
That kind of behavior  
Would never make them give in.

“Or, what if I was good and helpful  
Or sweet and kind?  
Now that might do a lot  
To help them make up their mind.

“That was a relief,” he sighed.  
“Getting that problem overcome  
But now I have to find a way  
Of raising the funds.”

His parents would ask,  
“Brandon, now listen to us honey,  
How do you think you’ll come up  
With that kind of money?”

“Let’s see” he would answer.  
“I get five dollars a week for doing my chores  
And I’ve saved fifteen dollars...  
(But I gotta have more!)

The money from Christmas and Birthdays  
Is good for a hundred or so.  
But that’s not enough!  
I need some serious dough!

Maybe I could bag groceries  
At Wendell’s Food-A-Rama Store.  
Or wash cars or sell cookies  
Or mow lawns, door to door.

How about my “College Fund “  
That’s in the bank, in my savings?”  
Now he was out of his mind,  
Talking crazy and raving.

Then an idea hit him,  
Like a lightning bolt, with a flash...  
“I know how to get some bread, some moolah  
Some Real Big Time Cash!”

He'd seen an ad in this month's issue  
Of The National Birdwatchers Society:  
"We'll pay One Hundred Dollars Per Photo  
Of Any Bird Of Unique Type Or Variety!"

Now he was really cooking.  
Now he had a plan.  
The Star Blaster is something he really needed!  
He must make his parents understand!

He pedaled like he was racing  
In the famed "Tour De France"  
Though he stopped once to fix the chain  
That chewed the bottom of his pants.

Then he was off again, like a mad man  
Down his street and through the alley  
He leaned his bike against the house  
And then forgot to unstrap Sally.

He came running through the kitchen  
Going fast, as he was able.  
Mom was there, cooking  
And Dad was reading at the table.

In between breaths he spoke  
About the bike at Uncle Sam's.  
Of his needs and schemes and hopes and dreams  
And of the money and his plans.

His parents looked at each other  
Thinking what to say.  
Then his father cleared his throat and said  
"Son, I think you need to pray."

"Oh, I have," said Brandon.  
I prayed the bestest of my best.  
And I think...yes, I'm positive  
God's answer was a 'yes!'"

Brandon's father started adding up the payments;  
Then cried "Oh my goodness sakes alive!  
If this is correct  
It comes to four-hundred-ninety-nine and ninety-five!

“That would really stretch our budget  
Way, way beyond the max.  
And that doesn’t even count assembly charges,  
Shipping and handling or State and Federal Tax!”

And there is something else  
that I'm not sure I understand  
about your hopes and dreams and thoughts and schemes...  
And especially about your plan.

The birds of Lumpitybump have been protected  
for many, many generations  
but you will have people coming  
from every county, every state and every nation.

Then they will pry, they will probe  
they will spy and they will test;  
to find which of these birds  
and their nests is the best.

They will come from the East  
and they will come from the West  
to run 'nest tests' on the nests  
to see which nests are best.

They will test and they'll test  
and they'll become so obsessed  
to find which nest is the best nest  
in this 'best-nest testing fest'...

Which I don't think is best  
for the birds or their nests,  
but I don't want to lecture  
so I'll give it a rest!

Brandon felt his dreams, like autumn leaves,  
Slowly begin to fall.  
It seemed like nothing else mattered;  
Nothing else mattered to him at all.

But then he saw a ray of hope  
In what he heard his father saying...  
“But...maybe the Lord will provide a bike  
If you find a deeper way of praying.

We could try to figure this out,

By examining only the facts.  
Or we can seek to know the will of God.  
By simply praying by the A.C.T.S.”

He looked down at his son’s face.  
He knew this was confusing.  
“A.C.T.S is how your Mom and I pray.  
And it’s a method well worth using.”

“Each letter of the word stands for a thought,”  
His father explained to him.  
“And, when those letters form the word ‘ACTS,’  
It’s called an ‘acronym.’”

“If you’ll take one letter at a time,  
Just to guide you through,  
You will find that, as you’re praying,  
God will speak to you.

“Then, let His spirit fill your heart,  
Growing like a seed,  
And, if you’re truthful and you’re willing,  
He will answer every need.”

Then, his Mom walked over.  
She had been standing by the sink.  
She held a napkin, with some cookies  
And a glass of milk to drink.

Pushing his blonde curls aside,  
She kissed him on the head.  
She set the milk and cookies down,  
And this is what she said.

“‘A’ is for adoration.  
This is the perfect place to start.  
It’s telling God how much you love Him  
With all your mind and soul and heart.

“God’s desire, when He made us,  
Was to be worshiped and adored.  
Even if we tell Him ten million times  
He never does gets bored.

“‘C’ stands for ‘Confession.’

This is really important, Son.  
Its telling God how sorry you are  
For every sin you've ever done."

Then Dad added, "A lotta folks wonder  
Why their life is lacking blessing.  
It's because Sin is a wall between us and God  
And it's only torn down through confessing.

"Next, 'T' stands for 'Thanksgiving.'  
No, not for the Holiday, gee whiz!  
Our prayers should never stop thanking God  
For all He does, and gives, and is.

"For a thankful heart is a happy heart.  
It follows Jesus' way of living.  
Your selfishness will fall away.  
You'll be generous and giving.

"Last of all is 'Supplication.'"  
"Great googally moogally!" said Brandon.  
"What a word!  
Isn't that something like a gaggle or a herd?"

"No," laughed his father.  
"The way we define 'to Supplicate,'  
Is to pray to God for all your needs and then  
Watch and hope and wait!

"After all that praying  
Here's the part where you get to *ask*...  
And, if you've prayed with an open heart,  
It's a *blessing*, not a task.

"Okay," said Brandon, "I'll pray!  
I'll pray. And I'll even fast!  
But I gotta pray quickly  
For this offer can't last!

"How many times *should* I pray?  
Or should I just pray all the time,  
Till the Lord gives me  
The Star Blaster Five Thousand Three Hundred & Nine?"

"Sweetheart," said his Mom,

“Just trust God to decide.  
And, if you do, I promise you,  
He’ll truly be your Guide.”

“Okay” said Brandon, “I guess I’ll try  
To pray just like you said.”  
Then he went upstairs to his room,  
And kneeled down by his bed.

“Wow” thought Brandon, “praying like that  
Has gotta be a strain!”  
Like bumblebees in a mayonnaise jar  
The letters were buzzing in his brain.

“Hmm, let’s see... ‘A’ is for Adoration.  
What did Mom say *that* was for?  
O yeah! It’s like the way I love Sally,  
But ten-zillion trillion times more.

“Or *maybe* it’s like... I love my Mom and Dad!  
Oh yes (he reasoned with a nod),  
Maybe *that’s* what it means:  
To adore a perfect and holy God.

“But my love for God should be greater  
Than for my sister or my brother.  
In fact, it should be *greater*  
Than for my Father or my Mother.

“Of course, loving God, *instead* of my sister,  
That won’t be hard to do.”  
Then it seemed like God said, “You can’t say that you love Me  
If you don’t truly love her, too!”

“You’re right, Lord, I know I say I love You.  
But I don’t *show* You near enough.  
Instead of spending time with You,  
I’m usually doing other stuff.

“Like playing with cars and trucks,  
Or remote control planes,  
Or watching cartoons on TV  
Or playing video games.

“You’re the God who created the *Earth!*  
And Jupiter and Mars!  
And Comets and Black holes  
And the Sun, the Moon, and Stars.

“But I am so little!  
I’m just a speck on the Earth!  
What in the world could You think  
That *I* was ever worth?

Then God said, “What you’re worth is the Life of my Son...  
He gave it up for you.  
Be glad that it was done.”

Brandon understood now about Jesus.  
And it made him want to cry.  
But he prayed this, as he wiped back  
A tear from his eye.

“From now on I promise  
I’ll give You more time.  
I’m going to do better God.  
I’ve just made up my mind.

“Mom and Dad were sure right!  
This is really a blessing!  
And, if it’s okay with You, Lord,  
I’ll begin my confessing.

“Ya’know I’m pretty young, Lord.  
And there’s not a lot to admit.  
Because I’ve only been here  
On this earth a “short bit.”

“There’s not enough time in my life  
To turn it into a mess.  
So it shouldn’t take long  
To get all my sins confessed.

“Then we can move on,  
My wrongs having all been addressed.  
I don’t think it should take longer  
Than nine seconds, I’d guess.”

But Brandon, as he thought and prayed,  
And opened up his heart,  
He realized, he had many sins  
And wasn't sure, just where to start.

He remembered putting a spider  
In the lunch box of Mary Lou McCall.  
It scared her so bad that she ran into a wall.

There was the time he tied together  
The shoelaces of Bobby Duluth,  
Who tripped when he stood up  
And chipped a permanent tooth.

Last summer, he and his friends  
Thought they were being so cool  
By pouring a bottle of soap-suds  
Into the Snellville Town Pool.

When the lifeguard started chasing  
Brandon and his friends,  
The lifeguard slipped on the bubbles  
And fell in the deep-end.

Brandon said "Lord, I'm not a bad kid...  
I do what boys just like to do...  
Like putting chocolate pudding  
Inside my Pastor's shoe.

"And when that new boy came into class  
(I think his name is Skip),  
My foot shot out and then I said  
'I hope you had a real nice trip!'

"And, if I take a lizard or a snake  
From its hiding place,  
I just can't seem to resist  
Dangling it in front of someone's face!"

Then he thought of his sister Angela.  
Where would he begin?  
He was always plotting ways to tease her,  
And he knew it all was sin.

Brandon never thought that his confession

Would've taken him so long,  
But now he begged for God's forgiveness  
For so much that he'd done wrong.

And so he moved on to 'Thanksgiving,'  
That is what the 'T' stands for.  
He said, "I know my parents aren't really rich  
But I know that we aren't poor.

"So, what am I really thankful for?" he asked,  
"Well, of course there's my family.  
We have plenty to eat and a nice place to live.  
God, You've been really good to me.

"We have everything we really need;  
And we all still have our health;  
But when a deal comes along like a "Star Blaster Sale,"  
It'd be nice for some extra wealth.

"I'm thankful that You love me.  
Mom & Dad love me too, I know..."  
Then, suddenly, he remembered a TV ad  
That came on his favorite show.

The man on TV was talking about  
Showing God's mercy and His Grace.  
He was standing in the mud by a cardboard house  
In a really nasty place.

He stood next to a little boy  
Who looked so poor and thin.  
Brandon asked "God, if you show your love by what you give,  
Does that mean you don't love *him*?"

"Of course I do" spoke God again.  
But, don't *you* have more than you need?  
That little boy is a lamb of Mine  
That I want you to feed.

"You'll be surprised what love can do  
With an extra bowl of rice.  
That child someday will come to know me  
Because of *your* sacrifice."

"But I'm not a God who pushes

If you know Me, that's well known.  
If you decide to help him  
Make that decision on your own."

Finally, Brandon came to the 'S,'  
And he remembered that it stands for 'Supplicate,'  
Which means to pray for all your needs  
Then watch, and hope, and wait.

Of all the things he might ask for,  
Of all the things that he could name,  
To ask God for a Star Blaster now  
Would've made him feel ashamed.

But, there *was* one thing he did ask for  
As he prayed into the night:  
"Lord, just stay with me and comfort me,  
And help me do whatever's right."

As Brandon was finishing  
Before he had a chance to say "Amen,"  
The door flew open with a bump  
And Sally busted in.

His Dad said from the hallway  
"I can't believe you forgot about your pup!  
I found her in the alley,  
In the basket, buckled up!"

"I'm sorry Dad," said Brandon,  
"For a while, I lost my mind.  
But, I think I'm *finally* over  
The Star Blaster Five Thousand Three Hundred and Nine."

As the days stretched into weeks  
Brandon didn't see much of Lumpitybump or the birds.  
He wanted to show God  
That he was really a boy of his word.

For he had promised God,  
When he was down on his knees,  
That he would like to help feed  
Some starving kids overseas.

"Let's see," he said, "I get

Five dollars a week for doing my chores,  
And I've saved fifteen dollars.  
But I gotta have more!"

So he headed thru the neighborhood  
And down each Snellville Street.  
He would stop and he'd talk  
To the people he'd meet.

He'd talk about how giving to others  
Relieves you from greed.  
And, if you have something extra,  
Fill another one's need.

Many of the people of Snellville  
Were so touched by him  
They started sending him money.  
And it kept rolling in!

On the day he sent it off  
He couldn't believe how it grew...  
It was short Nineteen Thousand dollars  
By only Twelve Eighty Two!

His Mom put the check in an envelope  
And wrote down the address.  
And sent it "Next-day Delivery"  
By Federation Express.

When his Dad came home late,  
Brandon was working on his bike.  
He had bought streamers at the Dollar Store,  
Some tires, and a light.

A horn and some reflectors,  
Flaming decals, and spray paint.  
His Dad thought how pleased God must be  
With his "Little Saint!"

"Son, I've gotta tell you  
Something happened as I was headed home.  
Uncle Sam wanted to see me,  
So he called me on my phone.

"When I got down to his store,

He said ‘Don’t you think that is funny,  
That all by himself,  
Your son raised all of that money?’”

“No, Sam,” I answered,  
I don’t think it odd.  
He wasn’t working all alone...  
He had lotsa help from God.”

Then Uncle Sam said  
“God’s been good to me, too,  
With my *Super Discount Biz*.  
How about if I write you a check,  
And you send it off with *his*?

“Also, I appreciate what he did.  
It was a truly selfless thing!  
I’d like to give some little, you know,  
Token of my esteem.”

“And so, Son,” said Brandon’s father,  
Walk with me to the van,  
And I’ll give you that little present  
That was sent by Uncle Sam.”

When the back door was opened,  
It sparkled like diamonds when they shine!  
It was a Star Blaster Five Thousand  
Three Hundred & Nine!

Brandon squealed and shouted and yelled!  
And I think he did some flips!  
But, then, the praises for God’s grace  
Came flowing from his lips.

He couldn’t wait to fly down Lumpitybump.  
The desire in him burned!  
“Calm down,” said Dad, “before you go!  
And tell me what you’ve learned.”

Brandon said “I realized I have more than I thought --  
Plenty enough to share.  
God just had to wake me up  
And change my heart to care.

“For God has give us everything we need!

And perhaps a whole lot more...  
Just like it says on the sign  
In front of Uncle Sam's *Super Discount Store!*"