Hope Springs Eternal, “I’m From Gerritsen Beach”  
By James N. Fetter

It is more than just a mere coincidence that it is May and the beauty of our universe is again magnified by the aroma and bouquet of flowers. The naked trees again are beginning to exhibit their magnificent features after being entrenched in the grasp of the frigid winter’s clutch.

The majesty of nature in all its grandness does wonders for our body and our souls. The misery of winters snow and ice and of course, coping with those frigid winter winds is easily forgotten when suddenly appears the first daffodil peeking through that mound of snow we shoveled only days ago.

Our feeling that the cruelty of winter is behind us and only better days are ahead is not unique. This optimistic perspective, while often written and discussed, was arguably best articulated by Alexander Pope in the 17th century in his Essay of Man when he wrote, Hope springs eternal in the human breast.

While this story seems to be just another poetic story about the beauty of nature, it is truly not. It is however a story about human nature and a recent display of this comparison of winter and spring.

It was just a few short weeks ago when we all watched with horror on television or read the many articles about the theft of a motorized wheelchair. The story was even more appalling when we learned the chair was stolen from outside a church as the owner of the wheelchair was inside attending a service.

This story is a horrible story regardless of where it occurred. Unfortunately the story took place in Gerritsen Beach at St. James Church. The circumstances of this story are an embarrassment to all who live or have lived in Gerritsen Beach. Gerritsen Beach is a better place than this incident portrays. The residents of Gerritsen Beach past and present have been harmed by the perpetrators of this horrendous act. This ugly incident has tarnished and diminished the pride one has in saying “I’m from Gerritsen Beach”.

Brian Daly is the one who suffered most from this repulsive incident. In no way is this story intended to imply that the embarrassment to the community of Gerritsen Beach even approaches the amount of suffering added to Brian’s life as a result of this theft. Adding inconvenience to a man with a debilitating disease is horrible.

It should be noted that Brian did the community of Gerritsen Beach proud as he encountered the local television news media. Animosity was absent from Brian’s comments and discussions with the news media. Brian simply stated with pride his thanks to the Gerritsen Beach community for their support. If the theft of Brian’s wheelchair was winter in Gerritsen Beach, Brian’s reaction to his circumstance was the first sign of spring.

If Brian’s reaction to the circumstances was an early sign of spring the efforts of Joe Ciaccia can only be described as a blooming summer rose in mitigating Brian Daly’s life. Joe Ciaccia managed to arrange for his employer, Bay Ridge Toyota to purchase a new replacement wheelchair for Brian. Numerous other organizations from Gerritsen Beach also have undertaken
efforts to raise money to replace Brian’s chair and they too should be recognized for their efforts. There is now some discussion in Gerritsen Beach to add a wheelchair access ramp to St. James.

The noble efforts of Joe Ciaccia and the generosity Bay Ridge Toyota lead us to the second line of Alexander Pope’s essay, “Man never Is, but always To be blest”. Their efforts instill some sense of pride back into the community and provide us with the dignity to say with pride, “I’m from Gerritsen Beach”.

Webmaster Note: www.OurGerritsenBeach.com is about the good of Gerritsen Beach past and present. The website reaches 39 states and 9 foreign countries. If there is any interest in supporting Joe Ciaccia and others in the construction of a wheelchair access to St. James you can contact this website and I will direct your interest to the appropriate group.