

THINKSDAY

## *Samara*

April 2, 2026

*“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.” — Carl Rogers*

When I was a kid, I loved the “helicopters” we made from the seeds of maple trees. The double blades were awesome and fun to launch from the deck over the garage to watch them whirligig away in the wind. The singles worked too, but often I’d open them slightly at the seed end and stick them on my nose instead. No one ever called me a precocious lad. But no one ever suggested I wasn’t somehow precious and loved. My parents didn’t let me do everything I thought I wanted to do (I thought them quite strict) but I don’t recall them ever restricting my dreams or chastising me for my boyhood imagination or times of empty mind-space. (Although they did — after a time — call me back to awareness of my duties and assigned chores.) I was free to be me, whoever that might be.

Much later in life, after I fell hopelessly in love with each of my five grandchildren, I discovered that those whimsical maple seed helicopters are formally named “samara fruit.” And, I learned that “samara” has its word origin from Hebrew with a meaning similar to “guardian, or guardianship.” Oh, I thought, I doubt that’s where the term “helicopter parenting” originated, but, in its most well-meaning if misguided intentions, it should have been.

That discovery made me reflect on my own parenting performance. Was I such an accepting, encouraging, supportive, inspiring, patient, centered, and loving Dad for my sons as I had experienced in my own childhood? No, not really, but I tried. I wasn’t a horrible ogre. Was I, to them, the faithful guardian of their dreaming, aspirations, and unfolding; and was I as positive, loving, gentle, and clear as I now observe the parents of each of my grandchildren are today? Regrettably, no. I was not.

But I am growing, and learning, and evolving in my old age — instructed and inspired and awed by my sons and even more so by my amazing daughters-in-law. Those five precious

and precocious grandchildren are loved, protected, and provided for as were my sons. But where I fell short, the middle generation soars: I delight to watch as the latest generations' souls are unfolding and as they are lovingly guided and guarded and nourished by their parents. And so too is my soul expanded and nourished. I am learning and I can change; I'm seeing so much that I missed.

Where I was impatient as a parent, they are present and uplifting. Where I had expectations and standards, they have encouragement and inspiration. Where I had ambitions and dreams, they have tenderness, belief, and coaching. Where I had no time, they make time. Where I had laughter, they have joy.

Little do those wonderful parents know that as they raise their young children, they are enlightening and changing this old man too. I am so blessed and so grateful to witness their love; and be learning to change how I am with those I love. A silly samara is sometimes still pasted on my nose, but the doubles are firmly affixed to and guardians of my heart now.

*Happy Thinksday*