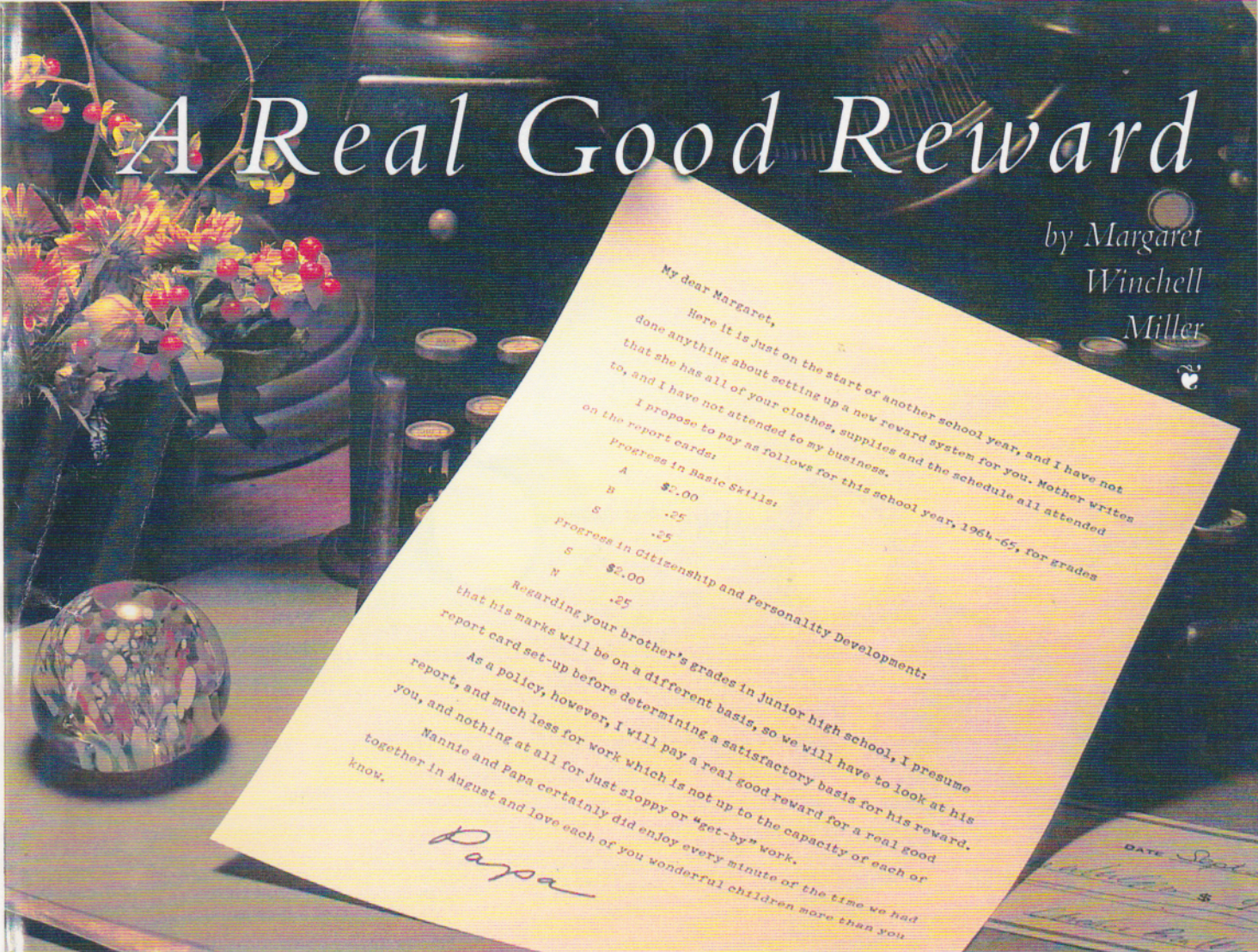


A Real Good Reward

by Margaret
Winchell
Miller



My dear Margaret,

Here it is just on the start of another school year, and I have not done anything about setting up a new reward system for you. Mother writes that she has all of your clothes, supplies and the schedule all attended to, and I have not attended to my business.

I propose to pay as follows for this school year, 1964-65, for grades on the report cards:

Progress in Basic Skills:	
A	\$1.00
B	.50
S	.25

Progress in Citizenship and Personality Development:	
S	\$1.00
N	.25

Regarding your brother's grades in Junior high school, I presume that his marks will be on a different basis, so we will have to look at his report card set-up before determining a satisfactory basis for his reward. As a policy, however, I will pay a real good reward for a real good report, and much less for work which is not up to the capacity of each or you, and nothing at all for just sloppy or "get-by" work.

Nannie and Papa certainly did enjoy every minute of the time we had together in August and love each of you wonderful children more than you know.

Papa

The other day, while going through my father's files, I came across this type-written letter sent to me by my grandfather when I was eight years old.

Attached to the letter was a copy of the check I earned for the first marking period of second grade (Papa was a serious record keeper), written in the amount of \$9.25.

I remember looking forward to report card days. Because I rarely did work that was not up to my capacity (and it was never sloppy or "get-by"), I knew my grades would be good. Papa's checks didn't serve as an incentive for me to work longer or harder than I already was. I thought of them more as a present than a reward. Even when he stopped paying us for our grades, I continued to do well in school. The rewards of a good report card, two proud parents, and a feeling of satisfaction seemed to be enough to make me want to do my best.

My son Evan is the same age this year as I was when I received that check. He brings home equally good report cards, and although

we recognize his efforts in other ways, it has never occurred to me to pay him for his achievement. Once, when he brought home straight A's, he and I went to a neighborhood restaurant after dinner and had a piece of cherry pie and a cup of hot tea. He was as proud and as happy as a king.

My parents saved most of the correspondence from Papa regarding our grades. Perhaps they thought I'd be amused to recall his serious approach to our work in elementary school. They were right. But I've never forgotten what a tender and devoted grandfather he was to us, or the lesson he taught us through his unique reward system. It's a lesson that has proven true throughout my life. As a policy, we receive a "real good reward" for "real good work." Whether that reward is a piece of pie, a \$9 check, or simply a sense of satisfaction at having done your best, it makes "real good work" worth doing. 6

Margaret Winchell Miller lives in Houston where she runs a corporate communications business.

"The reward of a thing well done is to have done it."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson