The rest of the story...

On other pages of this Oct. 7 edition of The Park Falls Herald you could read a story of two young men who recently took part in their first black bear hunts. On this page I’d like to share some things I didn’t on the other.

One can learn much from a 10-minute phone conversation.

My first contact with Brigid O’Donoghue was by telephone. Sheer force of personality, caring and exuberance can definitely be transmitted over a phone line. The woman is sincere, full of joy and positive outlook. Her love of life and children shines through as she speaks of her “sweethearts”. If I had half the woman’s energy I might make inroads on my “to do” list.

My first conversation with Jordan Lafler’s mother Gina took place over the telephone. It was a stormy night and our connection was bad, but I had no problem hearing the love she feels for her son. That was clear as a bell. She’s had many struggles, and I knew this. But they certainly didn’t affect her outlook on life. Or Jordan.

And Jordan. I could hear the smile in his 12 year old voice. Vocal in the friendly reception and tender loving care he’d received from the people in Park Falls. They’d taken him to church and even the local priest had wished him good luck on his hunt! Maybe it was that extra blessing that helped him bag a bear in a place he’d never been before, with people he’d only just met as his hunting companions, and with a gun he’d had little experience with. All pride, excitement and joy over his recent dream-come-true experience. Who could have guessed that mere days previous he’d been in a hospital, receiving blood transfusions?

Then there was Miles Miller’s dad Scott. In our phone conversation I heard a good father, willing to do anything in his power to make his son’s life as normal as possible. I heard a voice full of honesty and caring.

One can also learn much from a short visit.

Meeting Miles was a high point. The kid has a smile that could melt butter. And his attitude! His hunting companions told me how he’d given his seat on an ATV to one of the older members of the hunting party who seemed to be tiring after a long walk. His dad told of how he’d refused to accept a “modified” Eagle Scout badge from Boy Scouts of America, which they would have given him had he been able to complete the 50-mile ride requirement for his bicycling merit badge. He wanted the “read deal” he said, and he got it.

Miles himself told me of his rambunctious lab, Abby, and I told him of my aging, but still rambunctious lab, Pacer. He told us of his twin sister Melody. Bob Mader has a twin sister too, they jokingly commiserated over sisters in general. He took the gentle ribbing of his hunting companions with good humor. It was a rainy, gloomy, overcast day. I didn’t remember until he stood up and limped away from me that he even had a disability. No “why me?” in this kid’s vocabulary.

Yes, one can learn a lot from a little.