

Roller Coaster Ride to Positive Outcomes

Just when you think you've seen or heard it all . . . a situation arises that defies definition or initial understanding. Over the last month we've been exposed to natural disasters (hurricanes), political posturing (aka the election process), and the credit crunch enveloping Wall Street and Main Street, plus the attendant bailout proposals, failures, and plans. Couple all of that with everyday living and business operations, and it continues to be a wild ride of sudden and extreme changes, repeated peaks and valleys, serious concerns, and ridiculous moments that allow us (hopefully) to laugh at ourselves in the midst of trying to make sense of it all.

I don't know about you, but when things get to be a bit overwhelming (a term I've never understood since I know of no one who has ever been 'whelmed'), I am often grateful for distractions that, at least in the end, make me smile.

With that in mind, my mom came through, once again. I'm quite sure she didn't do this for my entertainment. Yet, as the world we know is 'crashing' in many respects, my 98-year-old mother announced that she was getting married! And she did! Now, who would have imagined such a thing?

Mom's world has changed over the past few years. Since the passing of two of my older sisters who lived nearby, she has been left with no immediate family in the area. As her physical capabilities have diminished, her world has shrunk to the retirement community where she lives, visits by friends from her church, and the occasional visits of family and friends who are scattered across the continent and around the world.

Through it all, her spirits have stayed pretty positive, due in no small part to the daily visits from her friend Bill Elliott, who lives in the same retirement community. As they shared time together, their friendship deepened and 10 days ago they were married. As usual, mom did it her way (with lots of help from the folks who provide care within the retirement village) and once she said 'yes' very little time passed. So, no one from the family was there, but friends and neighbors helped them celebrate and I have it on very good authority that 'a good time was had by all'.

During the few days that led up to the event, there were lots of phone calls and varying levels of questioning and decision-making. One good friend asked mom if she was sure this was something she wanted. Mom assured her she'd prayed about it and it was what she wanted. The friend's response, "Did you give God time to answer?" Who am I to say, but it made me smile and wonder if any of us consider other answers once we've made up our minds.

In many respects, regardless of those involved, I thought it happened pretty fast. Then I remembered - she and Bill are both in their 90's; it's all relative! For them, it appears to be a good decision, based on respect, friendship, and genuine caring for each other. What better time to create companionship and a sense of stability than when the world is in crisis.

I can't speak for anyone else, but I believe mom made a good decision for her. She handled her world and her situation with grace and thought for the future. How often do we make decisions based on less pragmatic thinking and simply forge ahead to 'get the situation handled'? Perhaps if we, as leaders, simplified our thoughts, made practical decisions based on the future good (rather than greed), we might have positive stories with happy endings in sight.

What's making you smile during these challenging times? Are you sharing your stories with others and finding the positive moments in each day? We're not all in our 90's, but we always have the opportunity to do something positive to change our world.

Aloha,