

## SOME THOUGHTS FOR ACHIEVING PRODUCTIVE and EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SERVICE

I have learned many lessons during my life experiences but one of the important ones that I remember was at a very early age, at age 5. I was the eleventh of twelve children and we lived in a very small town of Brandywine, MD about 15 miles east of Washington, DC.

I remember the day when my Dad and I were walking to the general store along a graveled-dirt country road, which was about one-half mile from our home, to get some groceries. This was during the depression years in 1932.

My Dad was a scientist but with the small salaries that were paid to scientists during those years, along with the cost of raising twelve children we were a poor family. Most of the time there was only enough money available for the bare necessities of life. For a youngster living out in the rural-country area, just a walk, alone, to the general store with your Dad was special event, for occasionally you might talk him into buying you a piece of candy.

On this particular day that I was walking with my Dad, I found a “dime” in the gravel along the side of the road. I picked it up and I was a very excited boy. A dime during those depression years had some purchasing power and I did not waste any time telling my Dad about what I could buy with it. But, before I could say very much my Dad said, Son, give the dime to me. “This dime belongs to someone else and we must see that it gets returned to whoever lost it”.

I begged my Dad to let me keep the dime, but he said, Son, the owner of this dime is probably as poor as we are and needs it, and you must always remember, **“the only thing that is rightfully ours is what we work for”**. He said, someone else worked for that dime and “I will take it to the owner of the general store and ask him to try and find the owner of the dime.” If he cannot find the owner of the dime than he can give it to someone who comes to the store who is poorer than we are or give it to a charitable organization.

I was a very disappointed child that day and shed a lot of tears over that dime, but I am a very grateful adult today, for the lesson I learned from my Dad more than 73 years ago.

In a story I wrote in 1990, titled, “Running With Life”, after exercising more, eating more wisely and losing 50 pounds, I said, “Every moment of life holds the potential for positive change and one is free to plan and aspire to whatever you can visualize yourself fulfilling.” Regardless of where you are in life, you can always work to achieve your potential and make life meaningful..... In keeping with this philosophy, it is important that we pause occasionally to look at the school of thought we use in our journey through life. Therefore, it is my pleasure to share with you some of my thoughts and experiences.

As I share with you, “Some Thoughts for Achieving Productive – Effective Public Service, I share them from the context of a philosophy that has worked well for me during my 62 year career in public service and science. Let me assure anyone reading or listening to these thoughts that I respect and honor your potential for achieving your goals and personal growth and I am aware that you also, could be sharing a philosophy of equal importance and I could be learning something from you. I believe that each person is a unique individualized expression of the universe, and it is not my desire to impose my philosophy or principles on others. I cannot make a choice for you or anyone else, for that is a responsibility each individual has to take.

Therefore, as I share some thoughts and experiences, let me encourage you to use what I say to motivate you to review, examine and be on a search for a philosophy and supporting principles that have character and integrity, that will allow you to come closer to achieving satisfaction in your public service position and personal life. When you do this, I believe you will also come closer to realizing your dreams, meeting your goals and achieving harmonious living.

I believe that it is important for every person in public service, from the highest executive to the lowest paid employee, to be asking themselves, **“What is the purpose for my job?”** .....I believe the purpose and only reason for public service positions is to serve the Tax Payers who pay our salaries. It cannot be said too often that this applies to every person, from the highest paid to the lowest paid, from the senior executor to the newest employee of the janitorial service crew. We all are in service positions..... If we remove the title that each of us have for one reason or another, whether it be Administrator, Doctor, General, Director, Captain, Supervisor, Clerk, Janitor, Scientist, you name it, then we all become **custodians**, with a responsibility to the Tax Payer that pays our salaries to practice good **stewardship** and perform a service for the benefit of the public and society we serve.

It is my judgment that the Tax Payers are better served when authority and responsibility is shared with employees. I think that one of the most important ways to motivate employees to contribute the best service is to empower them, by giving them authority with responsibility and to give them some ownership of service. Managers and supervisors should let their employees perform their jobs with the least amount of management interference and the maximum amount of management support and encouragement. It is important for every supervisor responsible for oversight of employees to believe that one of their most important responsibilities is to help the employee be the best employee possible in fulfilling their job obligations. Likewise it is important for every employee to see that they work with their supervisors in a way that supports and accomplishes the mission that the supervisor and the employee are responsible for.

I think this is a good time to remind ourselves of some fairly well time tested guidelines about serving. The law of giving and receiving applies to everyone. That includes management and labor. What you sow you reap. What you give comes back to you. Treat others unfairly and you will find others resisting you. Serve others and they will be more likely to serve you.

Let me share with you and sing some words from a song that Whitney Houston made popular that got my attention some years ago. These words are from the song, “One Moment in Time”.....**“I want one moment in time when I’m more than I thought I could be. When all of my dreams are a heartbeat away and the answers are all up to me. Give me, one moment in time when I ‘m racing with destiny, and then in that one moment in time I will feel, I will feel, eternity.”** In reality every moment in time is a moment in eternity.

Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines **“time”** as, **“the measure or measurable period during an action, process or condition exists, the point or period when something occurs.”** I believe many people pass up measurable quality experiences in their life because they think that they can put off until some other time. But, in reality, some other time that we may think will allow us to capture the experience that we let pass us by, does not exist. So, remember to:

**“TREASURE EVERY MOMENT YOU HAVE, KNOWING THAT, YESTERDAY IS HISTORY, TOMMORROW IS MYSTERY, TODAY THE PRESENT MOMENT IS A PRECIOUS GIFT, SEIZE IT, CHEERISH IT, USE IT WISELY, ENJOY IT, AND SHARE IT WITH OTHERS IN YOUR JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE.”**

If one can live the present moment practicing a philosophy and principles that brings real positive meaning to their life, there will always be opportunities for quality experiences, resulting in good memories of the past and a good chance that one will be better prepared for the future. Let me suggest that whatever is one's philosophy, principles, spiritual understanding, religion or what ever it is that you choose to believe in; that you work at it to be sure it works for the present moment and is not a belief that is waiting for something to happen in the future.

Living the day to day, moment to moment experiences is the real journey through life. I believe that our journey through life can be more meaningful, constructive, worthy, and helpful to ourselves and humankind, if we develop a useful and practical philosophy and practice a common sense understanding of life. So, let me encourage you to:

**“LET SUCCESS IN YOUR LIFE BE IN THE JOURNEY RATHER THAN THE DESTINATION”**

I believe our journey through life will be more productive, meaningful and enjoyable when you choose and develop an attitude that allows you to look for the good, see the good, the positive, and the constructive part of life. Negative things and activities appear to be around us but spending time and energy on the negative issues and problems rather than focusing on the solution is a waste of good resources and energy that can be used on the positive side of life which can assist us in building better foundations for living.

I believe that one can find more harmony, peace and satisfaction in life if you believe in a source of energy that is bigger than yourself. A source of energy that is infinite. I believe many people miss out on an opportunity to benefit from and to better understand this source of energy because they get hung up on the meaning of words as a result of early conditioning in their lives. Some are not willing to take the risk or are fearful of taking the risk to understand this source of energy because of their early childhood or young adult bondages. I do not think it makes much difference in the words that one uses to define this highest form of energy as long as it is done with the highest respect, honor and belief and finds a balance between the physical, mental and spiritual values of life.

In order to reach your highest potential I believe that it is important for each person to have a high esteem of themselves, have a strong faith, belief in yourself and believe that you are a unique individualized expression of the universe.....Likewise it is important for each person to see the goodness and potential in their fellow human beings and know that they also are unique individualized expressions of the universe.

I believe our lives would be more productive and satisfying if we understood the importance of making our own choices. Too often adults and young adults let others

make choices for them rather than taking the initiative and responsibility to make their own choices.....**Choice is the catalyst in the life process**..... I believe that the energy we use to make a choice to do something positive comes from the same energy source that we use to make a choice to do something negative.... But, when one makes a choice to use the energy in a positive way, with positive motivation that brings strong character to life, I believe the energy is transformed into the highest form that can transform all things into something good and positive. When one understands energy at this highest level, you allow it to build bridges to accommodate the crossing of differences. You begin to understand that diversity and differences are not a threat but an opportunity for growth and constructive compromise. You begin to understand problems as opportunities to gain new experiences and learn something new.

I believe we find more meaning and harmony in life when we make decisions and choices that are simple and practical, that apply to the real life situation, choices that work to make living the present moment meaningful and productive. The “mountain top” experiences do not come often for most people. We are always on a journey, every moment of consciousness or sub consciousness, wherever we are and what ever we are doing, even while we are sleeping through the journey of our dreams. Let us make choices that allow success in life to be in the journey rather than the destination. Great results are not always achieved at once. We must be prepared to advance a step at a time with patience. And remember, **the road to success is always under construction.**

Now, this is a good opportunity for me to talk about “**Serendipity**”. Serendipity as I understand it means, **finding and letting important and beautiful experiences happen along the journey of life, often times when least expected to happen.** And I suggest, that maybe in the scheme of life, these experiences are intended to happen, if we are in harmony with the environment around us. I believe that our journey through life would be much more meaningful and enjoyable if we were more aware of serendipity and serendipitous experiences. Forty years ago I did not know the definition of the word, serendipity. I give Dr. Marcus Bach, a very special friend and author extraordinary of the book, much credit for assisting me in better understanding serendipity and a better way of life. I am also grateful to him for dedicating the book to me.

In appreciation for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you, I want each person participating in this Convocation to have as a personal gift from me, the book, “**The World of Serendipity**”, and a copy of my latest CD recording album just released this week, “**Jack Townshend Singing, The Sound of Music, and twenty-five additional hits of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**”.

## **Summary of Some Thoughts and Principles for Achieving Productive Effective Public Service and Personal Growth:**

- 1. “See first that the design is wise and just; that ascertained, pursue it resolutely; do not for one repulse forgo the purpose that you resolve to effect.” – Shakespeare**
- 2. Create your own reality consciously, rather than living as if you had no control of your life.**

Every mature adult individual has the responsibility to make his/hers own choices in life. Make constructive choices knowing that, whatever you conceive (C) has the potential for achievement (A) when you practice what you believe (B).

$C + B = A$ .

- 3. Be the change you want to see happen, instead of trying to change anyone else.**

If you want to see peace in the world, your nation, your community, your work place, your family, be sure you practice the principles of peace first. **“Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me.”** Act rather than react. If you expect others to respect and love you, be sure you respect and love your neighbor wherever you are.

- 4. See and receive all persons as beautiful exactly where they are and the most important person you must see as beautiful is yourself.**

You cannot see the beauty in others if you do not see it in yourself. Look at the potential of people rather than how they act, what they look like, their color, their dress, etc. If you see the potential in people, you will see the good in life rather than the bad and the negative. Demonstrate unconditional love through your mind/heart center rather than judging others.

- 5. Provide others and yourself with the opportunity to give.**

Give others an opportunity to express themselves. Listen to others, for they may have constructive ideas to share. The greatest meaning in life can come when one shares his/her life.

- 6. Perceive problems as opportunities.**

Look at problems as an opportunity available for a solution. In many ways problems are gifts for they give us an opportunity to learn something new and gain new experiences. When you treat a problem as an opportunity, you have decided to do something about it. Not every problem that is faced can be solved, but no problem can be solved until it is faced. All you need is a plan, a road map and the courage to move forward.

- 7. Have no expectations but abundant expectancy.**

Having great expectancy opens you to unlimited possibilities. Expectations can limit creativity. Expectancy provides opportunities for creativity, relaxation, harmony and patience. Expectations can establish a condition for stress, tension and failure. Expectations may have limitations that restrict reaching full potential. Expectancy will give serendipity a better opportunity to be experienced in your life.

**In closing let me share the following poem ( title & author unknown) that I think is a good guide for living, and a song, “That’s America to Me”, that I think sums up who we are and what we can be :**

**POEM**

Welcome each day for the challenge it holds,  
delight in the beauty each flower unfolds,  
do every task as well as you can,  
reach out in friendship, to your fellowman,  
treasure the rainbow more highly than gold,  
keep growing and learning but never grow old,  
smile through the times when the journey seems hard,  
find true contentment in your own backyard,  
savor each memory and keep dreaming a new,  
always believe in the good and the true,  
live and laugh as you travel life’s way,  
and live to the fullest each moment of the day.....

**SONG**

What is America to me? A name, a map, a flag I see,  
A certain word, Democracy! What is America to me?

The house I live in, a plot of earth, a stream,  
The grocer and the butcher and the people that I meet  
The children in the playground, the faces that I see  
All races and religions, that’s America to me.

The place I work in, the worker by my side  
The little town or city where my people lived and died  
The “howdy” and the “handshake”, the air of feeling free  
And the right to speak my mind out, that’s America to me.

The things I see about me, the big things and the small  
The little corner news stand and the house, a mile tall  
The wedding and the churchyard, the laughter and the tears  
And the dream that’s been a growing for about two hundred years

The town I live in, the streets, the house, the moon  
The pavement of the cities or a garden all in bloom  
The church, the school, the clubhouse, the million lights I see  
But especially the people, just - like - you, that’s America to me!

Thanks for listening and reading!

Jack B. Townshend,  
Special Projects Coordinator  
U.S. Geological Survey  
Geomagnetism Group  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-6920

Phone: Office 907-474-7626  
Home 907-479-2898

Fax : Office 907-456-0356

Email: <townshend@usgs.gov>