

...Looking Back...Going Forward

...A commentary by Peter Perry

Like most people, I occasionally examine the present situation in my life's journey and think about my past accomplishments. I also think about my future dreams and aspirations. I realize that my present situation and standing in life with respect to who I am and where I am and what I have become is the result of many small decisions and a few bigger decisions made during my journey. We all know that we cannot change the past, but nevertheless we as human beings often will wonder about the what ifs, and the possibilities of the different outcomes if we had only made other choices or chosen a different path. But that is not the way life works. Here we are today and we cannot change even the decisions we made yesterday, let alone those choices we made in the distant past.

I am a car collector and I often think about the cars that I owned and should not have sold and the cars that I could have purchased but did not. I sold my Ferrari because I was moving to Florida and didn't have the space in my garage...only to realize years later that the same car today had increased in value by almost tenfold. The same is true for my Maserati and my Corvette. But let's recognize that life's journey and the choices we make along the way do indeed result in different destinations. These choices are made at a time when the future is not certain or clear and those decisions were based on the circumstances we faced at that time. I do not know who said it but..." A schoolboy's after thought is wiser than a general's Forethought." That is a perfect explanation. Even though the rear-view mirror is much smaller than the windshield, it is pretty clear. Looking back is easy even through a small lens, but looking forward through that large wrap around windshield is not as clear and has a great deal of uncertainty.

For me, I like to look forward and I often make small lists of what I would like to accomplish. The more thought I give to my future aspirations, the greater my chance for accomplishing them. As I visualize in my mind and articulate that vision on paper, the clearer the picture becomes and the closer I get to the destination I had envisioned. I have travelled a long road and chalked up many miles. I have attained many of my goals, but there is still quite a bit of open road ahead. I often think about the trees in the forest. So much more that can be accomplished. My list continues to grow as the speedometer keeps rolling forward. There is so much more that can be accomplished. I need to rip the engine out of the 70 Porsche 911 and put in a new clutch. Finish my novel, get the new business on track, build another hot rod, rebuild the fuel system on the 1946 Kurtis and help my two sons get on the right path towards happiness. Maybe even a trip to Italy with my boys. And maybe a visit to the Ferrari factory. Yet, I have much to be thankful for. I have travelled a long way but still much more remains to be accomplished. Still have my Morgan and a couple of Porsches and a Mercedes Benz in the garage. All of them are old and worn, just like me, but still have many more miles to go.

I have a need to keep pushing because there has always been one word implanted in the back of my mind. Responsibility. That is the word that turns the key to the ignition switch which starts my engine. I have this inner need to be responsible to my family, my friends, my clients and all those who I come in contact with, some I have yet to meet or never have met. When we interact with others, we all affect their lives whether we realize it or not. We are a part of a community. The community of fellow man.

Excuse the lack of political correctness but so what, I am a conservative white male who believes in the constitution and values I learned growing up. As a real estate broker, I may sell a piece of vacant land in which a new building is erected and the business that occupies that building hires people to run that business. I feel a certain degree of responsibility towards the outcome of that business and the people who have been hired to work in that business. We influence the lives of others, often even for those people we may never meet. At the same time, we change the circumstances and these affect the choices that others make.

And so, we have a responsibility to do the right thing and be the best that we can be. We set an example and it is our responsibility to set a good example. Maybe it was the influence from others around me or from others who I never knew or met that created the situation to influence me on the road I choose to follow.

As I reflect on my past experiences and the knowledge I acquired, I think about being responsible. When the race is over and I reach the finish line, I hope that my influence on others has been positive. Have I been responsible and has my influence towards others been positive? I would like to think that I have made some lasting contribution and helped others get to their chosen destinations and in some way helped them to make the right choices. They in turn have a responsibility to share their life lessons with others. This year I just started another business and brought a few younger people in to mentor and train. I have thought about my past experiences and what I have learned and how the knowledge was acquired. I do not know the exact amount but I am guessing that most of my education or at least 98 percent of it was acquired after I got out of college. I have a two-year degree in Automotive Technology and that has served me well in my avocation of automobile restoration. It continues to serve me well in my passion as a car enthusiast. I draw from my automotive theory class when I tear into a 1971 Porsche engine or a 1964 Morgan engine. I attribute those skills mainly to school. But it also requires focus, confidence, judgement and determination acquired from past experiences. I realize that the business and management know-how was learned not from my formal education but from my real-world experiences.

My good Friend Bob never went to college and was very proud to let people know that he went to work right out of high school. He was delivering papers at a young age and his family was as poor as a church mouse. He by the way became the largest music retailer in the country with sales of over 1.2 billion dollars annually. He was worth hundreds of million dollars and was truly a self-accomplished multi-millionaire. Bob helped many and changed their lives for the better. There was a time when my business needed capital and my credit line was over extended. Bob was quick to take out his check book and write \$50,000 on the check. He is no longer with us but has certainly changed many lives for many families. He influenced mine for sure. It wasn't just the money he loaned; it was his work ethic that I most admired. He would call me every Saturday morning around 7 from his office to my office to ask if I was at work.

Most people at my age are retired and simply doing the easy restful things that one is supposed to do when they are well past 65 years. They have the financial security that gives them the freedom to do the things they want to do. For many, while they may have the time and financial means to acquire more and do more, the body does not always want to cooperate. But there are many things that are still possible. Things like sleeping late, movies, golf, reading a good book, travel and spending more time with family. And more time in my garage. For me it is different, I am still focused on the future. I think

about the tree and it brings to mind the following question often asked: How tall does a tree grow? The answer is simple to me...As Tall as it Can. For me, I still have that desire to climb a few more hills and complete a few more projects. God willing, If he can put a few more gallons in my tank, I hope to race a few more laps around the track. To me it's part of my persona and achievement gives me great pleasure to reach the finish line. It seems a lot easier to look to the future, envision the possibilities rather than to look back into the past and regret the choices we made, thinking about what could have been, what we could have accomplished. I accept where I am and what I have become. I prefer to focus on the future and look forward to transforming my vision into one or two more accomplishments as I drive on towards the finish line.

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