

Excellence derives from our spiritual roots

Thursday, November 7, 1985 O&E

(T.S.F.R.1073)

ONE OF the most popular books recently has been Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman's "In Search of Excellence." It spotlights the best run American companies and searches the principles of their success.

The authors quote a psychologist, Ernest Becker, who says, "It is the burning desire for the creature to count... What man really fears is not so much extinction, but extinction with insignificance."

People seek to be heroic either individually or by being a part of a winning team. Deep down there is a built in desire in human beings for excellence.

The motivations for excellence may be many. I fear there are too few influences in our present society which call for excellence in people. This is particularly crucial in our schools.

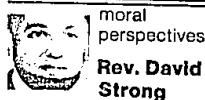
SCHOOLS, CHURCHES and synagogues have a special calling to encourage excellence

in people. The Biblical story of the talents, of a landowner who gave each of his servants sums of money to invest while he was gone and then came back to call them to account, illustrates a religious basis for excellence.

Life calls forth our talents and our willingness to risk investing and multiplying these talents. The motivations may be to glorify God, to help others or to fulfill my own ability. The motivations for excellence will always be mixed, as are all human motivations.

Yet the desire for excellence must be rooted in moral and religious principles. "Do your best" must still be the word of encouragement and challenge. The human striving for excellence need not be a competitive thing.

AN EDUCATOR once said that the best thing you can do for your child is to help him discover his talent and learn how to experience the rewards of investing it fully.



moral perspectives
Rev. David Strong

Movements over the recent years have worked against excellence. The '60s was a time of rebellion against many of the standard values, including the unfortunate values that led us to Vietnam. In the '70s many adults reacted to the children of the '60s by withdrawing the involvement with young people.

The drug culture complicated the problem. Church youth programs suffered. The schools generally worried more about behavior than about excellence. Teachers who sought excellence felt that they were in a minority without

support from administration or parents.

IT WAS also a time when quality and confidence in American products fell. The worse automobiles we had ever known were produced in the late seventies.

For many, excellence is still a stuffy word. They believe it to be an elite thing. Then we began to experience the quality of Japanese products, cars and electronics.

We had to clean up our act or give in to better products from overseas. There was a concern for quality rather than the most produced at the least cost and the most profit.

Our educational system is a key to restoring and seeking after excellence. We suffer with many teachers who either despair of demanding and inspiring excellence or simply do not care.

THE TRUE source of excellence, however, needs to come from our spiritual roots. Religion teaches us that each of us is unique. Life is short. God gives us our unique gifts and calls us forth to discover them and invest them. Risk doing and giving the best that you can.

A friend of mine told me his life story. He was born in a slum in East Harlem. There were two key persons who helped him achieve his present professional status in life. One was a minister who in over 30 years in that community encouraged and helped almost 3,000 black young people to go to college.

The other person was a college professor who helped him in the awesome task of making up for 12 years of poor English in the Harlem schools.

Excellence is a word and a reality which we need to think about, investigate and do something to achieve. Perhaps the import challenge is good for us. It's not just "buy American" that should be on the bumper stickers. It should be "Live and Produce Excellence in America."

Woman who lost her vision tells how she coped

Dear Jo:

In a recent column you recommended a talking clock to help with the isolation that goes along with being visually impaired.

I feel much sympathy for that 78-year-old woman her son wrote you about her blindness, as I was blind for one and half years. It is only recently, after five operations, that I got my sight back.

It is quite a different world for those who are blind — and believe me it is one awful struggle.

Even though I couldn't see I was determined to live alone in the country. My only companion was my dog that I had raised from a pup. She sure was lots of company and comfort to me. Friends came or called every week and that really was a blessing.

Through it all, I made up my mind never to feel sorry for myself as I figured even though I'd never see again, I



gerontology
A. Jolayne Farrell

wasn't going to spend the rest of my life wallowing in self-pity.

I decided to keep very busy every waking moment. In between my household chores I did some volunteer work (phoneing shut-ins and handicapped persons) plus I crocheted eight afghans and a couple of sweaters. (Now that I can see again, I find that I can do these handicrafts without looking at my work — an unexpected bonus.)

I guess the reason for this letter is to encourage that older woman to work

on her willpower and not to let her handicap control her.

A few practical things that helped me to remain independent were: mark the stove with masking tape for baking at 350, and the burners for low and high heat; learn how to operate a cassette player and put recipes and messages on tape; tape the handles on all doors that have steps on the other side of them.

I didn't have a talking clock, but I made sure that I knew the time of day by listening to a pocket-sized transistor radio, that I kept in my apron pocket. I also was kept aware of the time through a cuckoo clock.

Another thing that was a tremendous help to me was the automatic dial-

ling system on my phone. I don't know what I would have done without it.

Being without one's sight for any length of time is catastrophic. I am so thankful to be able to see again. I would like to encourage others in that position to never give up hope.

Mrs. Marjory Langstaff

Dear Mrs. Langstaff:

Your letter is an inspiration to people of all ages. Thank you for taking the time to write.

Also, I heard from another reader who suggested another audio clock made by a different manufacturer, Vox Clock. It can be purchased at Radio Shack.

Dear Jo:

I don't agree with you when you say that all older people should get a flu shot each fall. I got a flu shot two years ago and came down with the flu soon after. I wouldn't have one shot again — even if "they" paid me.

Western Reader

Injections against influenza do not cause the flu. It is a preventive treatment. Extensive research studies have confirmed this. It is most probable that you were infected with the flu virus (naturally) shortly before you injected and since it takes a while for your immunity to build up against the virus — you were not yet protected — and thus got the flu.

volunteers

Volunteer open house set

Anyone interested in doing volunteer work but not sure where his/her skills could best be used, should contact the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau (OCVB), which has a list of volunteer opportunities from more than 200 agencies. Phone 642-7272.

OPEN HOUSE — The bureau will hold open house from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15, second floor, First United Methodist Church, 1589 W. Maple, Birmingham. Let experienced interviewers match you with a volunteer job. Phone 642-7272.

DAY REHAB HELP — Beaumont Hospital's Day Rehab Program at the Barnum Health Center, Birmingham, needs many volunteers to escort patients, assist with lunch, help with grooming, craft and recreational activities. Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Also need clerical assistance. Phone 642-7272.

TOUR GUIDE — Troy Museum Guild is seeking outgoing volunteers to give tours through historic village and work with staff in presenting educational programs to children. Mornings or afternoons, Tuesdays — Sundays. No experience necessary. Phone 642-7272.

SECRETARY — Volunteer, 35-55, with good grammar and typing and phone experience is needed by the Eastwood Community Clinics in Royal Oak. Three full or half days a week. Phone 642-7272.

SANTA'S AIDES — Caring volunteers are needed by the Department of Community and Human Services, Pontiac, to help package, wrap and deliver gifts during the Christmas Basket distribution period Dec. 11-20. Phone 642-7272.

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