

## **This I Believe**

Jim Walsh

I believe in a better world. I also believe that a life well lived is a life that leaves the world a better place. Life is a gift, a gift that bears some responsibility.

I will not attempt to define the word “better.” Each of us has to figure that out for ourselves. But I can share a few thoughts about how we may best live. I have two observations, observations that find their power as much in what they imply about living as in what they do not.

- Life is lived in small moments. Taking nothing away from our celebrated accomplishments, inspiring displays of courage and the like, it is the small acts of grace and kindness that really leave the world a better place. Beware the seductive appeal of the grand initiative or even the allure of “quality time” with your loved ones. Paradoxically, they may distract you from the wonders and possibilities of a day-to-day life well lived.
- Life is a marathon. Running a dozen marathons over the years, I have been drawn to the power of this metaphor. Training for and running them reminds me of so many of life’s most important lessons. High aspirations matter; preparation matters; discipline matters; perseverance matters; guts matter. “All nighters” don’t cut it. Beware anything that smacks of the words “clever” and “finesse.” There are no short-cuts in life.

And in a life lived in its small moments, character is everything. Here are some key character traits that inspire me and the little aphorisms that guide me.

- Integrity: There is wisdom in the phrase “Say what you mean and mean what you do.” I am also guided by the phrase, “If your heart is pure, it will all work out.” Motives matter; integrity is everything.
- Honor: To quote Popeye, “I y’am what I y’am and that’s all that I y’am.” I am what I am -- honor and respect your special gifts. And that’s all that I am -- know your limits but don’t fret about them. No one is perfect.
- Curiosity: Our intelligence defines us. Formal education is just a beginning. Pay attention to questions more than answers, and try to listen more than speak. Look under rocks, around corners, and over the horizon.
- Optimism: “Keep your sunny-side up!” Words to live by. Bad stuff can and will happen but we cannot change the past. All we can do is move forward (forgiving ourselves and others if need be) and try to ensure better days ahead.
- Service: We discover ourselves and our place in the world by serving others. Love. Leadership is all about making others better for knowing us. Our contribution to others is our legacy.

Wrap these insights up in a personal package marked by a confident humility and a courageous patience, and we are well on our way toward living a life of purpose, meaning, and contribution.