

Our City

Last Tuesday was my birthday. It didn't feel right. There was a nagging that I couldn't put my finger on when I woke up at 4:00 am. Do you have that sometimes? You know something is wrong or will be, but you can't nail it down. I was still a bit upset from some news I had received Monday from out of the blue, but that wasn't really it either.

Now I am not an overly religious person, but I am in most regards very spiritual. A close friend asked me one time, "Marc why don't you go to church?" For most folks that might be a deeply personal question; for me the answer was simple, "I can't find God between four walls, I have to be closer than that." I don't know if I answered his question. We haven't spoken of it since. I won't explain it further than to say we are all part of something bigger than ourselves; we are all interdependent and somehow connected.

I have written of that primal sense I get from time to time when fishing or hunting; that sense that is at the core of our being in the cerebral cortex, that very primitive and survival related instinct that becomes heightened by danger or death.

The strongest the sense ever was for me was ten minutes before my Dad's passing. He was going to die - that was no secret. But he had been suffering for nearly two months, steadily getting worse. An hour before his death, I was as mad as I have ever been, mad at something I had no control over and did not understand. I found myself on one of Dad's favorite stumps out by the pasture. I was saying things to "God" that will probably send me to hell. Then I got a nudge from something unseen, and only felt. I went to the house to find the rest of the family gathering in Mom and Dad's room. Two minutes later he took his last breath.

Last Tuesday wasn't quite like that, but it was again more of a sense that something wasn't right. That night I got a phone call from Candice Reynolds, who was wanting the number of the school administration, to tell me that my friend and colleague Cherie Rymer had died from a heart attack while on vacation with her husband in Cabo san Lucas, Mexico. I am saddened by her loss, and grieve for her husband and children. Where is the sense of it? Only sadness and wonder I am afraid. Just that morning Sally and I sat eating my birthday breakfast when she asked, what was the matter? I told her, "Tomorrow is promise to no one. How many days have I wasted, waiting for it?"

From what I knew of Cherie she wasted very little. She was an exceptional teacher who had a passion for her students. She was someone the students liked, respected, and learned from. A few years ago she and Lori Stinson and I shared rides to Pocatello every so often. I found myself liking her sense of humor and wit very much. I won't profess to have known her as well as other teachers at AFHS, but she was my friend and I will miss her greatly. Her husband and children have my heartfelt condolences and whatever "God" may be, I hope God is with them as he/she was with me when my father passed.

The "not right" feeling has stuck with me most of the week. Not the way I thought Spring Break would turn out to be, for sure. And as I eluded to, Monday wasn't what I expected either.

Monday morning Superintendents Peirsol and Whited and I had just finished a meeting with a representative from Lamb Weston, who I happen to know quite well, when I got the news. We had been talking with my daughter Frances who has been placed in charge of organizing the company's community service; as April is Lamb Weston's designated service month. They want to donate 1000 hours of community service. I think Jeremy and Dusty gave her quite a good list of things we need help with both downtown and out at Willow Bay. I think you will be more than pleased with the results.

Dusty said he needed to talk to me. "OK," I said. "What's up?" He said, "I need to give you my two weeks notice." Not OK! In the end Dusty Whited is doing what is best for him and his family. He has taken a job in Scottsdale, Arizona in their Street Department. Needless to say he will earn much more than he can here. After getting over the initial shock, I wished him well in his pursuits. Since then I have been wondering how we will fill his position. Time will tell. I can tell you that American Falls is better off because of Dusty's service and expertise. I will miss him.

High School Principal Travis Hansen and I will have a difficult time filling the voids we were left with this week. Travis' is considerably different than mine as Dusty is only a phone call away and will be available to whoever replaces him to answer questions about ongoing maintenance and scheduled projects. Cherie will only be available in our hearts and memories.

In the end it doesn't matter how many birthdays we are given. What matters is what we do today that makes tomorrow better for someone or something; for when tomorrow never comes, for each of us all that will remain is what we left better than we found it. Cherie Rymer did that.

Until next week...