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"It is always the secure who are humble."

» **G. K. Chesterton**



Crossing That Bridge

I chuckled this week when I realized how much I was enjoying a scenario I don't think I would have noticed a little over a year ago.

In fact, prior to last year it would have been one of the most mundane things imaginable.

I listened in while eight senior citizens played Bridge for an hour.

Seriously.

It happened as a happy accident during an engagement I was excited to be a part of.

For the first time in over a year, I was able to address a large bank group in person.

Yes, real people with smiles on their faces...all in the same room.

I arrived early to the event and had an hour or so to kill. So, I grabbed a coffee and sat in a corner of a lobby/cafe area with my laptop.

The only other souls there were the eight ladies chatting and playing Bridge.

They talked more about lunch and grandkids than they did Bridge...and it was a joy to listen in.

When one lady made some kind of Bridge joke about her partner, I was the only one in the



Good Bankers Win

I smiled recently upon receiving a text from the old friend who recruited me into banking many moons ago.

At that time, his bank was set to open its first in-store location and was looking for "a different kind of manager" to run it.

Steve was their youngest branch manager and was terrified they were going to make him do it.

I remember teasing him that I felt unprepared for the role, but if they were considering him for it, it couldn't be all that hard. (And yes, we're still friends almost 30 years later.)

Upon joining the bank, I was sent to shadow and learn the ropes from another branch manager for 60 days. I often kidded with Jerry that it must have been a disciplinary move by management.

While the non-traditional banking world I would soon become a part of would be significantly different from the environment I was training in, things I learned in that short period stayed with me.

Unlike a few folks who seemed to see the non-banker now in their midst as an annoyance, he showed a lot of patience and graciousness with me.

room who had no idea what the reference was or why it was funny.

As they laughed, one looked over as if she were worried that they disturbed me.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. I smiled along like it was the funniest septuagenarian Bridge joke I had ever heard.

And well, by default...it had to be.

It says a lot about the last year that I was conscious of what would have been so incredibly humdrum in the past.

Folks were sitting together in public chatting, laughing and enjoying being with each other. I was grateful to be in the room.

I reflected on the hundreds (maybe thousands) of times I've sat in hotel lobbies, restaurants, cafés, airport terminals, etc. and been just a bit bothered by the "chatter" of others.

Like lots of folks who work on the road, if there was a secluded place to stick myself, I was there.

Sitting there in that café, I realized I would be happier still if even more of the tables around me were loud with chatter and jokes and laughter.

We've been in a no-contact, masked-up situation for so long that things we simply took for granted now can make for highlights of our days.

My sincere hope is that these moments will soon again be common and mundane, but we'll remember not to treat them as such.

Oh, and I also need to learn to play Bridge.

I was struck by how Jerry showed sincere interest in every customer in front of him.

While I was more wired to take over a conversation, he got the other person talking. He listened to their stories.

I once saw him have to turn down a customer's loan request. That person simply was not prepared for or in a position to take on what he was asking for.

Jerry took the time to ask questions and listen intently. He then showed compassion while offering sound advice and encouragement.

It was a powerful coaching session for the customer...and me. That customer practically hugged him while thanking him on the way out.

He walked out more prepared and motivated to succeed than before he walked in.

I remember sitting there and thinking that being a banker might be a cooler gig than I imagined. Good bankers help people succeed.

The text that I recently received was to tell me that my buddy, Steve, was just named a regional director of his state's most prestigious banking association. (Must not be that hard of a gig.)

And my ol' mentor, Jerry, (now a bank President and CEO), was named that association's Chairman.

It reminded me yet again of what kind of truly decent individuals make up the industry I became a part of almost 30 years ago.

Good bankers are out there helping people each day. Be that kind of banker.

**"Happiness is not the absence of problems.
It's the ability to deal with them."**

» Steve Maraboli

Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.

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