

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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The grass is *not* always greener. Is the grass always greener on the other side of the fence? Would we be happier in life with another career path, with a move to another house or to a neighboring city or state? It’s easy to get drawn into the illusion that the grass is always greener somewhere else, isn’t it?

In a Peanuts comic strip, Lucy is talking to Linus at the base of a hill. She says, *Someday I’m going over that hill and find the answer to my dreams. Someday I’m going over that hill and find hope and fulfillment. I think, for me, all the answers to life lie beyond these clouds and over the grassy slopes of that hill.*

Linus removes his thumb from his mouth, points to the hill and responds: *Perhaps there’s another little kid on the other side of that hill who is looking this way and thinking that all the answers to his life lie on this side of the hill.*

Lucy sort of scowls at Linus and, turning toward the hill, says, *Forget it kid!*

Like many of us, Lucy much prefers her fantasies. Certainly, it’s human to dream and to hope that our lives will be enriched and improved as time marches on. Nonetheless, most of the time, the grass is *not* necessarily greener somewhere else.

Fantasies are—well—fantasy. Fantasies can be fun, intriguing and harmless as fleeting pass-times. However—as is the nature of fantasies—we don’t see them in the fullness of their context, rough edges and all.

The other day I was listening to sports talk show host, Jim Rome on AM-940, interviewing Michael Franzese, the former mob kingpin, now a converted Christian and popular speaker at college campuses and athletic/business events across the country.

Known as a brilliant money-maker for New York’s notorious Colombo crime family, Franzese eventually pleaded guilty to a racketeering indictment, served a ten-year prison sentence and then, did the unthinkable—he quit the mob.

Over the years, with the success of *The Godfather* movies and HBO’s popular TV series, *The Sopranos*, there has been an aura and a sense of fantasy that have surrounded the elusive and hidden world of the mafia. To hear Franzese tell his story, life in the mob wasn’t only dark, criminal, and ugly; it was treacherous—an awful life.

In addition to the volumes of hard-earned wisdom and guidance Michael Franzese has to offer, perhaps one of the unanticipated benefits of his life-experience with the mob will be the gradual debunking and discrediting of mob life as anything even remotely desirable.

Of course, there are a host of other fantasies and not all fantasies are inherently evil. What they are is fantasy and, therefore, not real and—no doubt, most of the time—not a prudent life-option.

Seeing what is right here, before us. So much of the key to our lives is to be plugged in to the power and truth of *the moment*. That means right here, right now.

The solutions to our biggest problems in life—our most enduring frustrations—are found, not through some notable, external change, but inside us—in our hearts and spirits. So often, the green grass is actually right here. We need only the eyes and the imagination to see it.

There's undiscovered beauty and truth in every human being—waiting to be tapped, to be developed and to be celebrated. Abundance is ours, more than we can ever imagine. Take pause and take a look.

For any one of us, what *could be, can be*—both in our relationships and with our life-goals. We need only focus more on what is *right here before us*.

There is little benefit in spending too many hours focused on things we not only don't have, but things we don't need. So, a word to each one of us: throw open the front door, take a fresh look and delight in the green grass that greets us with the dawning of every day.