

August 19, 2011

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Working our way through the signs of the times. With all the change swirling around us, with the present volatility of our economy and uncertainty in the global market place, our confidence in the future has become more shaky than we would like. How could it not be?

The recent debt-ceiling debate was utterly depressing and demoralizing. I'm not sure what our government could do to appear more broken and dysfunctional. Still, life goes on and, as a nation and as communities, we *will* find ways of rising up, pooling our collective resources and moving forward. Such renewal is endemic to our American spirit.

It is also human, however, to have our doubts. As individuals, trying to sort our way through life's many undulations, doubt creeps into our psyche and spirit.

Is there a light at the end of the tunnel of these tough times? Am I going to be competitive in the market place? Do I have the skills and the experience to succeed? Will my children have the opportunities and possibilities I had hoped for them?

And the bottom line: whatever it is, *will I be equal to the challenges before me? Will I be good enough?*

Staying on track. It's easy in this life to get off track, to get knocked off our game, so to speak. It's easy to allow the austerity and discouragement of the tough times (particularly, tough economic times) to wear us down.

How will we ever be able to send our children to college, we lament? For years we've dutifully saved and, now, look at what the plummeting stock market is doing to our college savings!!

And what about our retirement? When will we ever be able to move into the retirement years we were eagerly anticipating and looking forward to?

In a nation with incredible natural wealth and resources, a nation where the vision of *the American dream* has been forever dangled before us, a vision where upward mobility has been largely taken for granted, it is more than a little disconcerting to wake up one day to a full realization of the economic mess we are in.

Still, as we work our way through these difficult days, we have to keep the *big picture* in mind. We continue to have a lot of pluses in our lives, a lot to build on. Moreover, in our democratic way of life, we can vote. We can go to the polls and vote for the kind of common future we desire. And if our elected officials don't seem to *get it* (our idea of

what the future should look like), we can vote them out in the next election.

Don't let your doubts and tell you who you are. In these austere economic times, times of uncertainty on many levels, we have to find strength and vision within ourselves built on the rock foundation of what we know to be true and good and right. And at the end of the day, we have to *not let our doubts tell us who we are.*

The future is with those who are able to put the past behind them—the worn out tapes and memories—and risk an openness to the challenges and possibilities of tomorrow. Yesterday's failures do not have to become tomorrow's fate. We can change. We can grow. We can dare to look at the world through fresh eyes.

It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who once said, *Our chief want in life is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.*

To *be* what we know we could be, we have to be willing to risk the change that our circumstances call for. Troubled waters of uncertainty will always be with us. Simply put, it's the human situation. So, we must persevere; and, again, we must never allow our doubts to tell us who we are.

For sure, there will always be heartbreak in our lives. But there will also be great joy. Great joy doesn't come without the possibility of heart break.

America will find its way through the economic woes of these days. My hope is that we are able to do this in ways that make for a better, more perfect nation; a nation where the richness of our diversity blends with the grandeur of our founding principles so both our nation and our planet move closer to God's purposes.