

Cybercolumn by Berry Simpson: Landmarks

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CYBER COLUMN: Landmarks

By Berry Simpson

The guys and I were sitting around discussing our current book, Soul Salsa, by Leonard Sweet, and we spent some time on this question: What was the best day of your life, and what was the worst day of your life?

Sweet believes disciples should landmark the moments in their lives. It's important to know when you're having one of life's best moments, or worst. And we should landmark both in our memories. Not to simply be stuck in the past, but as an exercise to remind us that it's the individual moments that make our lives worth living.

Berry D. Simpson

Answering the question is harder than it sounds, because we tend to round off our memories and don't dwell on specific days. We all had to think hard to decide on best and worst.

For me, I decided my worst day was in the summer of 1986, when my employer told me I was no longer being transferred to California. Four months earlier, the vice president of operations offered me a position as

district engineer in the Rio Vista office. On paper, it was a parallel transfer, but with respect to budget and activity and company visibility, it was a big opportunity to step up the corporate ladder. Cyndi and I traveled to Lodi, Calif., to look around and meet my future co-workers, and even though there were no houses we could afford to buy or rent, we were very excited about making the move.

Well, toward the end of May, still in Texas, I was in a quarterly production meeting with a lot of bosses when the regional manager pulled me aside and told me my transfer was going to be delayed for awhile and, in the meantime, see if I could hang out with the vice presidents in the room and try to make a good impression. I was stunned. I'd planned to leave for California the next day, we'd sold our extra car, Cyndi quit her job, we'd attended going-away parties, we were ready to go, and now I was supposed to enter some corporate fraternity rush to make a good impression to earn the position I'd already been offered. It was humiliating.

The delay stretched across the summer, leaving us feeling homeless and unneeded. Finally, months later, the regional manager told me the entire transfer had been canceled. The future was over.

That was my worst day. I felt like a failure to my family because I didn't make the cut. I thought I'd never be one of the big boys. In fact, I never really recovered. After that day, I never worked late or worked as hard as before, and the best of my imagination and creativity—my best assets—went to other ventures and no longer to my job.

My best day was in 1983 when I ran my first marathon, the Golden Yucca Marathon, in Hobbs, N.M.

It was an unlikely best-day scenario. The race had only a handful of runners, so most of the time I was running entirely alone with no other runners visible in front of me or behind me. Cyndi was off in Lubbock at a

seminar; my parents who lived in Hobbs were out of town for some reason; my grandmother was in town to cheer me on except that she was actually at my parent's house babysitting Byron (3 years old) and Katie (6 months old).

It was raining when I crossed the finish line. Two race officials stood in the rain to record my time and my name on a clipboard, and then they ran back inside out of the rain. I stood alone in the middle of the road, rain falling on my head, my entire body was soaked in sweat and rain water, feeling like the king of the world.

I knew at that moment that I could do anything. Anything! I'd slipped over the imaginary line when no one was watching, and I was changed forever. I knew I'd never be a fast runner—I had the wrong body type and wrong metabolism—but I knew I would always be a marathoner. Like George Sheehan wrote, "I not only became a man, but accepted the man I was." Standing in the rain, I was a manly man—no, I was The Man. It was a beat-the-chest moment. It was one of the best days of my life.

So you may ask: "Why should I care about Berry's best or worst day?" In fact, you probably shouldn't. But in reading my stories, maybe you remembered your own more clearly. Remembering those stories adds value to the moments of our lives.

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