



Happy Birthday

Last month it was New Orleans. Three weeks later I was flying the friendly skies again, but in the opposite direction, arriving at the hotel about 6:30 on a Saturday evening. My presentation to the Society of Nuclear Medicine was the next day. It was a warm evening, and with daylight savings time offering a couple more hours of sunlight, maybe a little tourist type sight-seeing might be in order. The hotel was near some of the most interesting places so it would be an easy walk. However, after 9/11 you probably couldn't get very close to some of the attractions, and if you could there would be at least as many police as tourists and you would have to show ID, go through metal detectors, and generally speaking be hassled to the point where the trip would hardly be worth it. So I headed out, without much enthusiasm, for what could be anywhere from a one (low) to ten (high) on the fun meter. Having been to this city many times on business, it had always been fly in, do your thing, and fly out. It was interesting to take a leisurely walk and really see things. Several images hit me right away. There are no skyscrapers as we know them and the buildings are magnificent, blending the old with the new. The streets are wide and clean.

After a short 10 minute walk I arrived at my first destination where the security promised to be brutal. Surprisingly, there was only one police car with one officer parked out front and two or three other officers on bicycles peddling about. The tourists were freely taking pictures and it seemed as if, in this famous place, 9/11 had not happened. The home was prettier and more magnificent than I remembered and it made me stop and wonder: just what is President Bush doing today at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

Here resides perhaps the most powerful man on the planet and yet he has the weight of the world on his shoulders. He has a war that the American people have turned against, enormous debt, immigration and healthcare issues, and a democratic controlled congress. His approval rating makes my low IQ look high!

Walking back up New York Avenue to the hotel I saw a couple of things which took on a little different meaning. In the next block was a row of newspaper boxes selling the Washington Post, USA Today and others. One can, in absolute certainty, say that there was an article in one or both or all of those papers blasting the President for whatever is going on bad in the country or the world. There are a lot of places on this earth where that would get you tortured and shot. Those writers have complete freedom to write what they want, and sell their writing one block from the White House!

The negativity surrounding the President is a growth industry that has taken on a life of its own. Having said it before, I will never use the great honor of writing each month as a pulpit from which to put forth my personal view. I am not supporting nor condemning any decisions that have been made by the President. That is for others to do.

In the next block was a huge church where people can worship as they please, or they don't have to worship at all. A lot of places in the world do not give their people that choice. In the small park across the street from the hotel there was some sort of bazaar going on. I was never in fear that a suicide

bomber was going to blow us up. There are some places in this world where bazaars are an endangered species.

The Leadership Challenge

My challenge to all of us is to take a few moments to think about all the great things we have. I did a program for a big TV station in Charlotte. Gingerly tip-toeing around the subject of all the negative stuff in the media (after all, they were the client!), one of the managers curtly said, "Farrell, there are two buttons on your TV. One cuts it off, the other changes the channel. Take your pick!" And of course he was right. We choose what we let in and if we are not careful it is easy for the negative to drown out the positive.

I don't know about you but there is a lot to be thankful for. I have a great job surrounded by truly committed professionals who do their best to make me look good even when I'm not. My boss, the Dean, gives me lots of freedom, and has stood up for me in a couple of "scrapes." My family is wonderful, my home is nice. I am reasonably healthy, I think. My 401k is up considerably.

Any of these can change and some inevitably will, but for right now life is pretty good.

And the best of all is that we are free. Truly free to do and say and travel as we please, where tomorrow if you want, get a new job and start all anew. I have been fortunate to travel to 30 foreign countries. There is no place on earth like the dear old US of A. I still get goose bumps at the Star Spangled Banner and continue to marvel at the jet fighter screaming overhead with a courageous young man or woman at the controls heading out to practice things that will keep us free.

I don't wear patriotism on my sleeve but it's there, and in large doses. I am not embarrassed to say I am patriotic, and as July 4th is right around the corner, the challenge for us all is to take a moment to be thankful for what we have, not just complain about what we don't have. Our country and the people running it are not perfect, but it beats the heck out of whatever is in second place. Happy Birthday America!

Follow-up from the May Leadership Challenge

Last month, after my trip to New Orleans and seeing first-hand the devastation left by Hurricane Katrina, I committed to put in place an emergency plan for our department. Charlotte Cardenas, who is our registrar, has had extensive experience in disaster preparedness after having worked in earthquake prone Southern California.

She graciously volunteered for this project and did a magnificent job in a short time-frame. Along with the written plan we have purchased an Emergency Office Kit – Megaphone, Weather Radio with AM/FM and flashlights that require no batteries. Also Charlotte and Jacqueline Hunt have signed up and will be attending CPR training through the American Red Cross. Please feel free to use any of our plan. We don't think safety is something to be copyrighted. Any advice you can give us on this work in progress will be appreciated. For our plan, [click here](#) and for the University's plan [click here](#). We are in the process of preparing an Emergency/Crisis Preparedness Course. Be on the outlook for dates this fall.

I encourage your response to these thoughts. farlgroup@aol.com

Have a great day!

Please forward this on or send us the e-mail addresses of co-workers, friends or family members who might enjoy a monthly leadership thought.