

## ON THE EDGE

Timely, thoughtful and always candid

### **Thank you for the funeral (whoever you were)**

About a year ago, I was on my way to meet with a new client for lunch. Traffic was heavy and I had squeezed in one more call at my office than I should have, but I was pretty sure I would still make it to our rendezvous location on time. What I hadn't counted on was the funeral procession going past my exit off-ramp. Hmm. I was moderately annoyed with both myself and the circumstances. I should have left a few minutes earlier and made that last call from my cell phone. Oh well. I resigned myself to being a few minutes late. Boy was I wrong.

What I hadn't counted on was that this was no ordinary funeral procession. It went on and on and on. The traffic light had already cycled twice, the police motorcycle was still blocking the intersection and there was no end in sight to the procession of cars with little purple flags. I could feel my temperature rising. How in the world could one funeral procession have so many cars?! Didn't "they" realize how much this was going to tie up traffic for those of us still alive? Couldn't they have picked a less-traveled route? Couldn't they at least drive a bit faster? After all, I (like many other people, I was sure) had places to go, people to meet and things to do!

Still no luck. After about five minutes, I actually started counting and the procession was now at 97 cars! I glanced at my watch, pounded my steering wheel and started wondering how I was going to explain to my client why I was 15 minutes late. I didn't have her cell phone number so I couldn't call her. I was just plain out of luck. No amount of frustration was going to change the situation. So I took my hands off the steering wheel, put my car in park and sat back in my seat and sighed.

It was only in letting go of my frustration that a different emotion began to nudge its way into my consciousness. Slowly, I began to wonder who this person might have been. How old were they when they died? Was it a man or a woman? More interestingly, what did they do professionally and were they involved with civic activities or philanthropies, as well? And just how many friends did they have? Certainly no family could have been this big! Hmm. What kind of life must this person have lived and how many other lives must they have touched for this many people to come, pay their respects and say their final good-byes? And then I wondered how I could have ever gotten so busy that I didn't wonder these questions right away.

The end to this story is not nearly as interesting or dramatic as the lesson that came from it. I ended up being about 10 minutes late for lunch and after a quick, "Sorry, I got stuck behind a funeral procession", my client and I had a wonderful lunch and discussed the business at hand. When I went back outside afterward, the sky somehow seemed a bit bluer than it had before, the fall air a bit crisper and the sun a bit brighter. The personal journey and epiphany I had been through beforehand had somehow brought me back to a healthier place...a place I've tried very hard to memorize the route back to whenever the pace of life gets a little too frantic.

This Thanksgiving week, see if you can find your own "healthy place". Stop, disengage from the rat race, and notice the little things that people do that are special and unique. When you're with family and friends, resist the occasional urge to judge, critique and evaluate (although it's so hard NOT to do with family sometimes)...just experience and enjoy their company. And the next time you find yourself waiting

for a funeral procession - whether there are 10 cars or 100 - pause for just a moment and wonder what good that person might have contributed to the world. Hopefully, people will one day wonder the same about you and me as we take our final drive across town.