A Lesson in Learning

He sunk his putt on the Thirteenth; mine was missed. So, I was one down as we approached the Fourteenth tee.

Being an intense competitor, I was inwardly jubilant as my opponent topped his drive, his ball coming to lie in a deep ditch. My drive was good – assuring me, I thought, of a par four or, with bad luck, a bogey five. He had his trouble all right, a seven for the hole. And I? As if an army of imps were in control of my every action, I, also, scored a seven! This almost unbelievable happenstance left me smarting to the core!

I awakened at 2:00 a.m. the next morning, still smarting. Then a thought came to mind that I had written into a recent book, *"Bearing in mind that everything that happens to you has an instruction peculiarly its own, try to deduce what that instruction is."* What instruction did that awful seven have for me? After some reflection the lesson came clear and clean.

However, in the same book I had written about the evanescent character of ideas, how like a dream they will flash into consciousness only momentarily and, if not immediately memorized or committed to writing, will depart from consciousness – gone forever. Not wanting to awaken my wife, I went over the idea several times, assuring myself that I would have it in my memory on arising. I returned to a contented sleep.

Came the dawn. I could remember nothing more than the awful seven having had an instruction for me. The idea refused to return. I tried to get it back through my breakfast, while driving to Idlewild, and on the jet to Chicago. No success. It was while walking around the passenger facility at O'Hare, waiting for my jet's departure, that the idea returned, again clear and clean. If I ever needed a confirmation about the flighty quality of newborn ideas, I experienced it again on this occasion: the idea took flight before my jet did! Gone again, totally gone! The jet was nearing the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport before the idea came to me a third time. Instantly, it was written into my journal.

The idea is of great value, a lesson of fundamental importance: *Never, never let yourself feel jubilant over the failures of adversaries. Their misfortunes or blunders or goofs signify no achievement for you. Exuberance is warranted, if at all, only by reason of your own meritorious actions. If you ascribe superiority to yourself by reason of the inferiority of those with whom you contest, you put the label of inferiority on yourself. You write your own no-good ticket!*

This lesson, in terms of the golf experience, dictates that I should have tried for a birdie three, not any sloppy score that would have bettered my unfortunate opponent.

This lesson, in terms of the free market, private property, limited government philosophy, dictates that we should never get any satisfaction over the blunders or even the temporary defeats of the socialists. Satisfaction, if ever warranted, must be limited to our own achievement in understanding and explaining the freedom philosophy. In no other manner can a significant leadership come into existence.

Everything that happens to one has an instruction peculiarly its own if one can but deduce what that instruction is.

Leonard E. Read

PRESIDENT

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