*Embrace the Journey*

Colorado State Council President 2017 – 2018

Acceptance Speech

May 20, 2017

Twenty six years ago we moved to Colorado and it was a dream come true. I have always loved the mountains and even as a small child thought of them as home. I did not know anyone at that time and was busy with looking for a job and getting our daughter ready for college. Someone came into my life that has changed it forever. I went to work for Joan Schlaefer and she invited me to join ESA and I was introduced to some truly wonderful women. JoAnn Singley was my sponsor and has become my traveling buddy. I would not be here tonight if it weren’t for those ESA sisters.

When I sat down to write my acceptance speech I was reminded of an article I had recently found on the subject of life being a journey not a destination. I was amazed that it related all the thoughts that I have had on the subject in such a profound way. I hope you don’t mind if I share this article with you this evening as I couldn’t have said it better.

Life is a journey filled with lessons, hardships, heartaches, joys, celebrations and special moments that will ultimately lead us to our destination, our purpose in life. The road will not always be smooth; in fact, throughout our travels, we will encounter many challenges.

Some of these challenges will test our courage, strengths, weaknesses, and faith. Along the way, we may stumble upon obstacles that will come between the paths that we are destined to take. In order to follow the right path, we must overcome these obstacles. Sometimes these obstacles are really blessings in disguise, only we don’t realize that at the time.

Along our journey we will be confronted with many situations, some will be filled with joy, and some will be filled with heartache. How we react to what we are faced with determines what kind of outcome the rest of our journey through life will be like.

When things don’t always go our way, we have two choices in dealing with the situations. We can focus on the fact that things didn’t go how we had hoped they would and let life pass us by, or two we can make the best out of the situation and know that these are only temporary setbacks and find the lessons that are to be learned.

Time stops for no one, and if we allow ourselves to focus on the negative we might miss out on some really amazing things that life has to offer. We can’t go back to the past, we can only take the lessons that we have learned and the experiences that we have gained from it and move on. It is because of the heartaches, as well as the hardships, that in the end help to make us a stronger person.

The people that we meet on our journey, are people that we are destined to meet. Everybody comes into our lives for some reason or another and we don’t always know their purpose until it is too late. They all play some kind of role. Some may stay for a lifetime; others may only stay for a short while.

It is often the people who stay for only a short time that end up making a lasting impression not only in our lives, but in our hearts as well. Although we may not realize it at the time, they will make a difference and change our lives in a way we never could imagine. To think that one person can have such a profound affect on your life forever is truly a blessing. It is because of these encounters that we learn some of life’s best lessons and sometimes we even learn a little bit about ourselves.

People will come and go into our lives quickly, but sometimes we are lucky to meet that one special person that will stay in our hearts forever no matter what. Even though we may not always end up being with that person and they may not always stay in our life for as long as we like, the lessons that we have learned from them and the experiences that we have gained from meeting that person, will stay with us forever.

It’s these things that will give us strength to continue on with our journey. We know that we can always look back on those times of our past and know that because of that one individual, we are who we are and we can remember the wonderful moments that we have shared with that person.

Memories are priceless treasures that we can cherish forever in our hearts. They also enable us to continue on with our journey for whatever life has in store for us. Sometimes all it takes is one special person to help us look inside ourselves and find a whole different person that we never knew existed. Our eyes are suddenly opened to a world we never knew existed – a world where time is so precious and moments never seem to last long enough.

Throughout this adventure, people will give you advice and insights on how to live your life but when it all comes down to it, you must always do what you feel is right. Always follow your heart, and most importantly never have any regrets. Don’t hold anything back. Say what you want to say, and do what you want to do, because sometimes we don’t get a second chance to say or do what we should have the first time around.

It is often said that what doesn’t kill you will make you stronger. It all depends on how one defines the word “strong”, it can have different meanings to different people. In this sense, “stronger” means looking back at the person you were and comparing it to the person you have become today. It also means looking deep into your soul and realizing that the person you are today couldn’t exist if it weren’t for the things that have happened in the past or for the people that you have met. Everything that happens in our life happens for a reason and sometimes that means we must face heartaches in order to experience joy.

Life is indeed a journey and on any journey one must have a tool to keep them heading in the right direction. That tool would be a compass.

**Webster’s definition of a compass is “a devise that is used to find direction by means of a needle that always points north”.**

**Webster also defines a compass as “something that helps a person make choices about what is right, effective etc”.**

When I think of it in terms of ESA I think of the women that have led us in the past and how they have kept us on the right path and keep us pointed in the right direction. They are the compass for our journey in ESA. This is why I have chosen the compass as my symbol.

This past year we have been inspired and have learned to adjust our perspective when we get caught up in little differences that can cause us to become discouraged. As we continue on this journey it is up to us to keep the light burning in the lamp of learning and continue to build lifelong relationships.

I have met some amazing women on my journey to this night. They have been an inspiration to me and I will forever hold them in my heart. ESA is the organization it is today because of these strong women who have laid the foundation. As we continue on this journey together I would like to share a thought that I have framed in my home. It is something that I try to use every day because it is so true.

*“Life is not a race - but indeed a journey. Be Honest. Work Hard. Be Choosy. Say 'thank you', and*

*'great job' to someone each day. Go to church, take time for prayer. The Lord giveth and the*

*Lord taketh. Let your handshake mean more than pen and paper. Love your life and what you've*

*been given, it is not accidental ~ search for your purpose and do it as best you can. Dreaming*

*does matter. It allows you to become that which you inspire to be. Laugh often. Appreciate the*

*little things in life and enjoy them. Some of the best things really are free. Do not worry, less*

*wrinkles are more becoming. Forgive, it frees the soul. Take time for yourself ~ Plan for*

*longevity. Recognize the special people you've been blessed to know. Live for today, enjoy the*

*moment.”*

*~Bonnie Mohr*

And finally,

Embrace the Journey but before you ask which way to go, remember where you’ve been.

~Kathy Garrison