

Character building a crock

By Dorothy Rosby

I lost my cell phone . . . again. It wasn't at home and it wasn't at my office. I could think of only two other possibilities and they both invoked fear and trembling. Either it had been stolen by someone with a lot of contacts outside my calling circle, or, worse, it was lost in the landfill--the one inside my car!

I asked a friend to give me a head start to the parking lot, then to call me and keep calling until I answered or gave up. I could just barely hear my phone vibrating--calling for help--the minute I opened my car door. The sound did reassure me that nobody was running up my cell phone bill. And it kept on reassuring me again and again while I dug through all the trash in my car. But what I really needed it to do was TELL ME WHERE IT WAS! I found it eventually, long after my friend had quit calling and my knees were dirty from kneeling on the pavement.

But this column is not about misplacing my cell phone, though I've misplaced it enough times to fill three columns. This column is about character building and what a crock it is. I've always told my son that frustrating situations like this one make us smarter, wiser, stronger, and kinder. I've quoted General George S. Patton, "Pressure makes diamonds." And Eleanor Roosevelt, "A woman is like a tea bag. You can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water." And me, "Manure makes your garden grow." Blah blah blah. I am so full of it! And he knows it. Now he uses these bits of wisdom against me when I'm in a difficult situation and am handling it maturely by throwing a fit, as I did during the above incident. He knows that, with all the character building experiences he's seen me have, I ought to have more character by now.

It should have been a character building experience when, out of all the thousands of gas pumps in the area I was traveling in a few years back, I somehow managed to pick the one with a crack in it the morning after a torrential downpour. I had to have the gas tank drained, get the gas gauge repaired, and stay an extra night. I got a new oxygen sensor out of the deal, but no more character.

I suppose it was a character building experience when I became the first person in recorded history to get a nasty infection from a paper cut. I might have even been the first person ever, since before recorded history, they probably didn't have paper. Anyway, ten days of antibiotics and still no more character.

It was a character building experience when I stayed in a hotel where the air conditioner rained on my bed during the night and the pool light floated in the swimming pool by its cord. No more character, though who knows what would have happened if I'd tried to swim.

Someone named Ben Johnson said, "He knows not his own strength that hath not met adversity." Someone named Dorothy Rosby says, "If he never met adversity, he wouldn't need to know his own strength."

There's a Jewish proverb that says, "I ask not for a lighter burden, but for broader shoulders." Suit yourself. My shoulders are plenty broad.

Many people will tell you God will never give you more than you can handle. If you ask me, that's not really an incentive to get any stronger.

Making Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's meals with an unreliable gas oven should have built some character. Having three low tires in one month should have built some character. Having my flight delayed because of freezing rain should have built

some character. And look, still no more character—no new oven yet either. I don't feel smarter, wiser, kinder, or stronger which leads me to believe all of it was completely unnecessary. If I couldn't get a column out of it, it would be of no use whatsoever.

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