



July 7, 2008

Revolutionary Times

Staff Writers

The impact of the Declaration of Independence.

This month, our nation again celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In the era we're living, the Fourth of July is more about gathering with family and friends to eat ice cream and watch fireworks than pausing to reflect on the significance of that great document.

Anyone who took a junior high history class or studied to become a U.S. citizen will recall the first seven words: "When in the course of human events," and that the second paragraph contains the oft quoted phrase about holding "truths to be self evident" and "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." However, the most powerful statement to flow from Thomas Jefferson's genius may be the last. It's way down there where most of us haven't journeyed to read in years: "...we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

Talk about walking the plank, poking the sleeping bear, risking everything. This wasn't a group of rich guys getting together to drink Samuel Adams' original lager and yell out the windows, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore." These were family men putting all they had at risk for a future free from "a long train of abuses and usurpations." Call them political entrepreneurs.

Jefferson, in fact, originated the ideal of ongoing adaptation of laws—a living, breathing plan—with subsequent generations remaking their constitutions to ensure self-government always rules.

And Here We Are Today

The 232nd year since John Hancock and 55 brave men affixed their names to history is turning out to be one of uncertainty and disruption. Soaring energy prices, sky-rocketing food costs, and an overall economic malaise rule the headlines. Printers show concern about stagnant or declining sales, even before the annual July slowdown impacts their financial statements. The trickle down effect of recession talk affects everyone—from your neighborhood pizzeria, to global manufacturers, to the kid down the street who mowed your lawn until you decided to save \$30 each week and do it yourself this summer. You see it every day when long time, loyal clients say, "We're going to hold off on that for awhile."

For many, challenging times like these are enough to accept the passing of what use to be a good life. That's certainly understandable. You've been beating your head against different walls for years, dealing with the continual reinvestment required to stay ahead of the technology curve in the printing industry, and watching margins decline and business walk across town or to the Internet for a few dollars less. "No one seems to care about how well we take care of them anymore," is an oft heard cry.

Oh for yesteryear...when July 4th meant baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and decent pay.

(It would be easy for me right here to use the technique so many writers turn to: point fingers. However, I'm not about blame, so I won't be placing fault at the hands of the President, Congress, the Supreme Court, Barack, Hillary, McCain, the

Federal Reserve, Big Oil, Hollywood, the bleeding-heart Left, the religious Right, the non-committal Middle, Rush Limbaugh, Al Franken, the Pope, the liberal media, the conservative bloggers, extravagant CEOs, outsourcing, illegal immigrants, gay marriage, OPEC, China, Iraq, or Mrs. O'Leary's cow.)

The Next Greatest Generation

The fact is Thomas Jefferson and his co-signers, George Washington and his soldiers, and the visionaries and their citizens who a decade later adopted the greatest Constitution in the history of the world would be disappointed in you and me. Why? Somewhere along the line we—and I'm speaking directly to my fellow Baby Boomers—got fat and happy and crawled into a cocoon of comfort.

We naively bought into the myth that the world would always be ours. That it was a right granted us under "the protection of Divine Providence" to fund soaring retirement accounts and have cash left over for vacation getaways, buy cheap gasoline for our luxury sedans and SUVs, and live in homes that would double in value every few years. Now, things aren't going as we expect, and we're standing around scratching our heads.

In reality, everything is cyclical. Put another way: Stuff happens. Fast forward 150 years after our forefathers drove the British back across the Atlantic and think about what our actual fathers (and mothers) overcame. The Great Depression and World War II, obviously, come quickly to mind. Compared to what they endured, we've had it easy for a lifetime.

Consider 2008 a wake up call. It's time to put pedal to the mettle. Future generations are counting on it. While my parents, who were born in the 1920's, are no longer here,

I am certain what they would say if I asked for guidance: "Place one foot in front of the other every day and believe you're going to make it no matter what."

The second half of the year isn't going to be easy. Some of you have danced this dance before. Others may be experiencing it for the first time. The most important thing is to get focused and specific—starting right this minute—on what you're going to do to survive. You need to pen a plan...a great document to lead you through the perils that lay ahead. Sit down by yourself and start writing. Sit down with your trusted advisors and start talking. Sit down with you team and start changing. Mutually pledge to each other that you will do whatever it takes to get through this together.

In 1962, President Kennedy welcomed 49 Nobel Prize winners by saying, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent and of human knowledge that has ever been gathered together at the White House—with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."

The Declaration of Independence is only 1,322 words—a mere 300 longer than this column. Pause to consider the genius it took to create such powerful prose that would fire the forces of freedom; then get to work igniting the revolution in your printing business.

David Handler is the founder of Success Handler, LLC, an executive coaching firm that helps clients explore their professional and personal dreams. He also likes reading historical fiction. In "The Lost Constitution" (2007), David's favorite author, William Martin, wrote: "In America, we get up in the morning, we go to work, and we solve our problems." To start solving yours, send an email to coach@successhandler.com [mailto:coach@successhandler.com] or visit www.successhandler.com [http://www.successhandler.com].

cygnus
Business Media



© 2007 Cygnus Business Media. Permission granted for up to 10 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.7575?icx_id=6775 into any web browser. Cygnus Business Media and Quick Printing logos are registered trademarks of Cygnus Business Media. The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.