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**Carpe Diem**

Whichever candidate wins the White House in three weeks, my hope is he adopts two priorities in the first hundred days. One: Rise above party lines and restore faith in our system. Every 75 years or so, this country seems to

**Ideas For Success | October**

Saturday, September 13th, will forever be etched in the memories of those who lived it in the Galveston-Houston area. You've probably seen the before-and-after pictures of beauty succumbing to destruction: expensive beach homes vanished with the morning light.

For our family – 80 miles inward from Ike's deadly landfall – the experience began at 2:00 a.m., as lights flickered and the power went out. With our oldest daughter safely away at college, my wife, two kids, our 15-year-old golden retriever and I crowded into the small downstairs bathroom, protected by walls on all sides. A TV-band, battery-powered radio kept us connected to non-stop updates of the hurricane's path.

For six hours winds howled, rain pummeled windows, and tall pine trees bent as they never had before. A few times that dreaded train sound – the whistling you always hear about just before tornadoes strike – abruptly disrupted minutes of light sleep. Finally, the noise stopped, and we emerged from our protective cocoon. Looking out the window, our street appeared to miss the brunt of Ike's blow. We soon ventured outside in the light rain to compare stories and find comfort with neighbors, some of whom we'd barely spoken to in a decade of living here.

Unfortunately, it became apparent other families in our community didn't fare as well. Trees lay on more than 100 homes in our subdivision including the one next door, its roof partially ripped off, chimney crumpled on the ground. At least 10 cars were crushed, parked unluckily in the path of a toppled pine. An elderly woman three streets over died when her house caught on fire, rescue units unable to deploy during the storm.

Our power returned five days later. Friends a few blocks away endured two weeks without electricity, utilizing portable generators to keep their refrigerators running. Broken lights snarled traffic. Grocery stores stocked only dry goods. Many folks missed paychecks as their employers remained closed.

Through all this, of course, shined bright rays of light. Neighbors helped neighbors. Kids played outside. People smiled more. In conversations with those who were the last to have their power restored, never once did I hear a complaint. "We're just lucky this is all we have to deal with," was a oft-repeated comment. While lives to the south are changed forever, ours returned to normal rather quickly.

**Walt's Wisdom** This month's magical idea from my encounters with Disney cast members seems most appropriate:

*"When an attraction goes down, that's when we start to scramble."*

face a defining moment. From ratifying the Constitution in the 1780s, to the Civil War in the 1860s, to the Great Depression in the 1930s, a strong leader emerged as a guiding light. To steer us through the challenges ahead, Obama or McCain must become a statesman in the image of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt. Two: Change business-as-usual in our nation's capital from one of high-powered, pork barrel, political influence to a climate where the people who represent you actually do the job for which you elected them. Every modern-day president gets a library. They only build monuments for a select few. The 44th Chief Executive needs to be worthy of someday having a memorial on the Washington, DC Mall.

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A disruption on Space Mountain at Walt Disney World, the resignation of a key employee in your business, a natural disaster striking your community - those moments provide people wonderful opportunities to escape their comfort zones and do great things.

**Strength From Within** The Dow Jones Industrial Average has dropped more than 20 percent this month. With a 40 percent decline since hitting an all-time high a year ago, the stock market is nearing record losses seen only during the Great Depression and the 1973-'74 recession. These are indeed times that try our souls.

However, if you want a lesson on what to do with your investment portfolio, you only need look as far as Warren Buffett, the richest man on the planet. He's a buyer and a holder right now, continuing a lifelong disciplined approach to finding value in the hysteria.

In an October 1941 speech at the prep school he attended as a youth, Winston Churchill said (the often misquoted) phrase: "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in..." Say those 21 words to yourself each morning and whenever you're feeling overwhelmed with doubt about where things are heading.

Jim Collins' legendary business book *Good to Great* includes a discovery he calls the Stockdale Paradox. Named in honor of the highest ranking prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton, Admiral James Stockdale, it's based on the observation that those who survived mistreatment by their North Vietnamese captors viewed their predicament differently than those who succumbed. The business lesson behind the "powerful psychological duality" Collins observed is: "Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties AND at the same time confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be."

It's essential to take an honest and deep evaluation of your situation in the midst of so much uncertainty AND it's imperative you never ever lose faith you'll make it through and be better on the other side. That philosophy works during hurricanes, and it works in the rest of your life and business, too.

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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