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Red, White & Blue

Our family traveled to Randolph Air Force Base recently to observe the retirement of Colonel Timothy W. Strawther. After 26 years serving his country as an F-16 pilot,

Ideas For Success | June

Lately I've been making my way through David McCullough's biography on John Adams. The first 135 pages lead to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. While historians give George Washington much deserved credit for his role in founding this nation, the man who followed him into the White House also contributed to our freedom. The more I read, the more I understand the risks taken by so many those 233 summers ago.

Adams, of course, was the first president to become the father of a president. The second, George H.W. Bush, celebrated his 85th lap of the sun last week – as he did at 80 and 75 – by parachuting out of an airplane. He then promised to do it again in five years. It happens June 12th is my birthday too. The similarities end there. The most courageous thing I did was navigate morning rush hour traffic in Houston. If I were alive in 1776, I would have spent the Revolution in safe confines writing about what was happening.

[For One More Day](#) An executive I previously coached – who became a good friend – asked me to lunch recently, and upon arriving at his office, I noticed on his desk a handwritten list of things he wanted to discuss. I smiled because that was exactly how he prepared for our coaching sessions. He began with social...schedule dinner with our spouses; proceeded to business... update company performance; and concluded with a surprise: "I have cancer."

Having lost my mother and oldest brother to that disease, I wasn't shocked hearing his news. As our conversation progressed, I mostly listened and allowed him to share. "I don't think I'm in denial," he said. "I'm simply sad. Sad because I love life. Sad because I might not live to meet my grandkids." Still, he told me better days are ahead...and said he has confidence in his doctor.

It's easy to get caught up in all the things that go on in your busy life. The human desire to live takes for granted the sun will rise tomorrow. However, as you know, everyone's days are numbered... and that means yours, your family and friends, and your business acquaintances. News like "I have cancer" is a wakeup call to pause and love those important to you. Perhaps now is a good time to start.

[Words of Wisdom](#) When I sought my friend's permission to share his story, he asked me to encourage you to schedule a physical and cancer check. Regular doctor visits increase your odds of having a long life. Of course, the longer you live, the longer you'll need to stay on top of your game. With 50 on the horizon for me in 2010, I'm experiencing the occasional, "Um, hold on a second, and I'll remember what it was I was going to say." Sixty may be the new 40, but doctors have yet to fully cure the turning of the calendar.

"Old minds are like old horses; you must exercise them if you wish to

Tim is transferring his leadership skills to the civilian front. Having endured multiple tours in both Iraqi conflicts, he's earned the right to spend nights in his own bed.

"Bounce" married my friend Darla in 1987. As with all who dedicate their lives to the military, the Strawthers moved around the world. Their two children attended a combined 23 different schools before graduating high school. While I could write paragraphs about the things Tim accomplished, he would prefer me to describe what it felt like at the conclusion of the ceremony as his fellow pilots joined 200 guests in singing "Off we go into the wild blue yonder..." It made the hair on my neck stand up and made me proud to be an American.

This July 4th be sure to thank Mssrs. Washington, Adams, Bush, Strawther, and every brave man and woman who gives you the right to live in freedom.

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keep them in working order." – John Adams

Some choose crossword puzzles. Some do Sudoku. Some, like me, read. Whatever your age – and wherever you find most joy – take time to work out the 100 billion neurons in your head.

Career Paths In a memorable 1968 film, newcomer Dustin Hoffman – just before being seduced by Anne Bancroft – received guidance from a family friend that the key to his future would be, in a word, plastics. With today's economy, a national survey shows 80 percent of graduates are unable to secure full-time employment. To help those lost souls, my favorite guru – Seth Godin – published on his blog a list of worthy causes the graduate could pursue with this unexpected downtime. Here are my favorites:

- Spend 20 hours a week running a project for a non-profit
- Volunteer to coach or assistant coach a kids sports team
- Start, run and grow an online community
- Learn a foreign language fluently
- Run a marathon

Whether it's this bucket list or another, adventurous initiatives lead to self-awareness – unlike what happens at the conclusion of *The Graduate*. Since Hoffman's Benjamin has no job, he spends days drifting in a pool. His father asks if he's considering going back to school. When Ben answers no, dad says, "Would you mind telling me then what those four years of college were for? What was the point of all that hard work?" Ben answers: "You got me." In my view, the Class of '09 and each of us are called to do more with our lives. So put on your running shoes.

Addendum: Twenty years ago today the first Mr. Bush was new to the White House. It was two weeks since cameras televised the tragedy in Tiananmen Square. *Seinfeld* would premiere within the month. That June 17th – a sunny Saturday afternoon – family and friends gathered to celebrate a wedding. Time passes quickly. Happy anniversary, Kathy. I look forward to our next two decades together.

Until next month, continued success in all things.

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