

There is a quote which possesses my mind these days just as some haunting tunes have in the past.

Don Juan reminds his aspirant warrior, Castanada:

"YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR THE EXTRAVAGANT JOURNEY THAT IS YOUR LIFE. LIFE IS SUFFICIENT, SELF-EXPLANATORY AND COMPLETE."

You and I have participated in the extravagant journey of our century. Events such as World War I and II, Korea, Vietnam, the Moon Walk, the three assassinations, the hostages' 444 day drama, the Building of the New Earth efforts. It has all been intense and exaggerated--requiring too much, involving too many, going too far. It has all been done with an unsparing hand.

My own journey has been extravagant. I've imaged myself as an Order member with little more than average service and with no special problems. That's not a self-depreciating story. It's just that I was never there at one of the big moments which radically changed the journey of the Order such as the night Fifth City burned or the day someone decided that we'd make a turn to the world.

This fall as a member of the Detroit Regional Team, I was assigned to get a job. I wrote a modest resume and proceeded to have hundreds of interviews. One gentleman read the resume, opened his mouth slowly and leaned toward me:

"Mrs. Early, you have led an extraordinary life!"

"Yes, I know!" I returned smiling.

"Mrs. Early, I can't imagine your being happy here at Wayne County Agency on the Aging. Why our work here is really very bureaucratic and dull."

I assured him that I could do the job. "I can be bureaucratic and deal with your and my motivation to boot." I didn't get that job.

Our lives are lives on extravagant journies. And that's no secret to those who encounter us. And those same lives are sufficient, self-explanatory and complete.

Oh, I've really struggled with this recently. Last week, Diana was transferred to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. She lives on the fifth floor with twenty or so young people 1-22 years old. I stood there on my first evening after work realizing: 'God, I'm grateful that I've not become immuned to pain and to tragedy.'

Tragedy, like people, comes unique and unrepeatable. A 16 year old boy playing his first varsity football game jumped up reaching for the football. The tackle at his feet was quick and hard. It

whiplashed his spine. Steve's neck was broken. He is paralyzed from the shoulders down. His mom's hope beyond hope is that he'll gain the use of his body from his head to his waist.

Valarie, also 16, is a boney black girl who was shot in the back by her boyfriend. One of three slugs lodged in the spine. (She doesn't think that he really meant to do it. Of course, that doesn't matter now.) She will not walk again.

And there is Shin Jong, an oriental girl---the object of great celebration as she has just come out of a 10 month long coma. Her family huddles about her chattering excitedly, giggling and making pecking kisses on her face and head in between each bite of food being spooned into her mouth. Her life is obviously precious.

No explanations suffice; no long stream of words justifies. These lives just are. In real living color, they are. Nothing said would or could add to their completeness. As they are is quite, quite enough.

One evening before Diana was moved, I was visiting with Diana's roommate at Northwestern Hospital. Edna is 64 and has worked for Nabisco for years. She was caught in a slamming door. On that particular night, she was lying with her fractured back stretched out from head to toe on a striker frame bed. She was being turned every two hours (lying on her face and then on her back to equalize the pressure on her spine as much as possible). While we talked, she was looking through the striker frame hole to the floor. "Yes, I've discovered that I can do a whole lot of living from this position right here."

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