



Paul's Leadership Tips

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LIVING BACKWARDS

During the Christmas Season my thoughts and probably yours revolve around family and friends. The Christmas season while often stressful, is a wonderful time of year. However, it can be a very sad time if you lose someone close to you. Well, that's what happened to me and my family. My Father-in-Law died suddenly and expectantly just prior to Christmas.

I'm writing about him and dedicating it to all of you my friends who have lost a love one or a close friend. As firefighters we have many friends that we trust so much that we often consider them family. That's why we call it the "Fire Family."

My Father-in-Law Bill Collie was a 21 year veteran of the Los Angeles Fire Department where he spent most of his career in the Harbor Area. He became and remained throughout his career an Auto Fireman, a rank that no longer exists.

Bill was really a meat and potatoes guy and very proud of being a member of the LAFD. He often reminded me how much bigger the LAFD was than my SMFD. However, he was always ready to tell everyone he met that I became a fire chief. He often told me how proud he was of me. And since he was my idol that made me very happy. However, he also told me that I would never out rank him.

I gave a presentation at Bill's funeral and must admit had a hard time getting through it. As I was organizing my thoughts I thought, "If I die tomorrow, what would people say about me?" What about you? Would their comments make you proud of the way you lived your life and the choices you made?

There's an old saying: "If you want to know how to live your life, think about what you'd like people to say about you after you die... and live backwards."

Thinking about the legacy we want to leave behind can help us keep our priorities straight. When the end is near, it's not likely any of us will say, "I wish I spent more time working." Unfortunately, many of us only begin to realize the value of the time we have after we've frittered much of it away in shallow ruts going nowhere important.

It's difficult to think about today what will matter later. But doing so can dramatically improve our chances of living a full and meaningful life without regrets, or at least as many.

Knowing how we want to be remembered also allows us to develop a strategic plan for our lives. How much wiser would our choices be if we had the wisdom and discipline to regularly ask ourselves whether all the things we do and say today are taking us where we want to be tomorrow? I guess in a sense, we create our eulogies by the choices we make every day.

Thank you for reading. It makes me feel better to write about Bill and my lessons learned from his living and passing.

And, kudos to the LAFD Relief Association. They were amazing with the support, professionalism and kindness. Also, Chaplin Rick did a wonderful job coordination the service.

*VIVI BENE--LIVE WELL
RIDI SPESSO--LAUGH OFTEN
E AMA MOLTO--LOVE MUCH*

