

OpeningREMARKS

Sharing Life's Lessons

EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD STORY, BUT NOT EVERYBODY CHERISHES A GOOD lesson. We can welcome the lessons life throws at us, shrug them off, ignore them completely, or fire back with a vengeance. Often times, depending on the circumstances, lessons require a good dose of reflection before they're accepted and become part of that elusive commodity we refer to as "wisdom." Like anyone, I've had my share of experiences—good and bad—that I've learned from, and I'm sure I'll have plenty more. I cringe, for instance, at people who drive fast, distracted, and oblivious to their surroundings, because years ago I met a tree that way. It wasn't fun. Lesson learned. On a less dangerous note, I credit a pesky woodchuck for helping me realize the value of a good garden fence after it chomped through several rows of green bean seedlings. I'm also glad to note that I've learned—and continue to learn—from the mistakes of others. Now, of course, as a parent, I find myself regularly dishing out advice, even though my 6-year-old daughter is apt to respond with a look that says, "Don't worry, I know that..."

As I thought about the stories in this issue, I wondered how life lessons have influenced some of the inspirational folks we feature and how they share their lessons to the benefit of others. If you need inspiration, look no further than John Robinson '90, who was born with a physical disability known as congenital limb loss. In a wonderful memoir (excerpted here), he reveals the heart, courage, and spirit of a person determined to succeed and live the life he envisioned for himself. You can also look to the war veterans in "Yellow Ribbon Commitment," who have served our country and are now reaching for new goals through education. Then there's the late Major Grant Williams Jr., a longtime public safety officer whose quick smile and kind demeanor made him a confidant to generations of students who benefited from his gentle guidance. Or think about Sahar Alnouri '01, who is committed to helping improve the lives of Iraqi women amid the war there. My hope is that you find a quote, an anecdote, a piece of information that leads you to think and understand, to learn something from someone that can add value to your life.

We can find life lessons just about anywhere. They are there for the taking. All we have to do is recognize how they help us grow as individuals.



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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

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