

Even If You Get What You Want There Will Be Challenges

When my wife and I were first married, one of our hobbies was to buy and restore old furniture. I think we did it because we enjoyed it, but it was also a way to furnish our home with pieces we had found and restored.

One particular piece of furniture became more than an interest for me. It became an obsession. I wanted a roll top desk. At that time, a good one would have cost \$1,000.00 or more. So I was resolved to the fact that I would never have one.

Until one day, I was reading the newspaper and discovered an auction. An automotive repair shop was going out of business. It was an unlikely place to find a roll top desk for sale anyway. And that is what made my interest grow to a fever pitch.

I felt sure I was one of the few people who read that particular paper and noticed the desk. It was described near the end of a long list of front end alignment equipment, tire changing stations, jacks, tools and office chairs. There it was at the end of the ad but ever so clear; antique roll top desk.

I was really excited and I convinced my wife I should go. She reminded me of our budget limits. I assured her of my maturity and self discipline in making sound decisions. Two qualities I have never possessed.

Saturday finally arrived. I drove to the auction site. I strolled around among boxes of brake pads, used tires, and old car parts. I wanted to spot the desk without anyone noticing my interest in it. Then I saw it. It was over in a part of the garage that was about three feet lower than the rest of the floor. I walked over and gave it a casual once over. On the outside, I demonstrated very little interest. On the inside, my heart was skipping every other beat.

The auction started at 10:00 AM. I had to wait for what seemed to be an endless array of items to be put up for bid.

Finally, about 2:00 PM the auctioneer put the desk up for sale. I was pumped on the inside but subdued on the outside. Bidding started at \$75.00 (remember this was a long time ago). I waited. It hit \$105.00 and slowed to a stop. I finally raised my hand to go \$110.00. No one countered. Going, going, gone. It was mine. I could not contain my excitement.

The auction ended a few minutes later. I walked over to the desk and examined my treasure.

After I had paid for my purchase, I backed up the truck I had borrowed to load up the desk. Then I found some volunteers to help me load it. With one person

on each corner, we bent down and lifted up. Then in one smooth motion the desk fell into a hundred different pieces like a bunch of Legos coming apart. Nothing broke yet every joint that was held together with glue came apart.

Only then did I learn that the garage and desk had been under water. A few years earlier a flood had covered the entire street and since the desk was in a lower part of the building it had been submerged for days.

I picked the desk up one piece at a time and put it in the back of the truck. Some of the mechanic guys stopped by to console me and tell me that I had just bought some really nice antique fire wood.

With my pride hurting and spirit broken, I headed home. My wife didn't fuss. She could have really nailed me, but she didn't.

After I recovered, I knew what I would do. I took it to a small antique shop and contracted with the man there to repair it and he did. Then I had the desk I wanted. It still was a great bargain on a limited budget and now I had another story to add to its history.

I learned a big lesson through this one experience. Sometimes we want something so bad we can taste it. It might be that position one level above where we are now. It can be the corner office with the great view. Or, we may believe that if we had a certain territory we could sell more than anyone else.

Finally the day arrives when we get what we are pursuing. All is well for a short period. Then reality hits. The position we wanted isn't quite as wonderful. The corner office isn't convenient to the copier. The demographics are changing in the territory we thought we had to have.

Leadership is all about dreams, goals and reaching them. It is also about facing adversity. There are setbacks. There are disappointments. To me, adversity is the real test of leadership. How a person handles the tough times is a key indicator in how effective they will be in leading others. If you can't deal with it, you cannot expect others to follow you. Leaders aren't leaders without followers. Followers don't follow leaders who won't deal with the difficult times, people and situations.