

A Life Lesson from a Broken Arm

-Live your life; don't re-live your regrets

For the first time in my life – at 58 years old – I broke a bone.

How did it happen?

Earlier this year, I missed a step, fell forward and then found myself embarrassingly sprawled in the middle of a busy car-lane of a multi-storey carpark. My immediate reaction was to get up quickly to save whatever shred of dignity that was left in me – and hope that no one was around ready with their hand-phones to capture the sorry spectacle of a near two-metre tall specimen lying on the road. Trying to stand up, I realised I could not move my right arm. To cut a long story short, I had fractured my elbow and required an operation to put in a metallic replacement for the radial head that was removed.

Rather than keeping our eyes always on the rear-view mirror of life, our focus should be forward looking – what can we do now and in the future to make a difference with what we have. With such an attitude as individuals and as a community, we can be hopeful that the future is one where, truly, the best is yet to be.

What did I learn from the four weeks that I was in a cast and recovering from the operation?

My vital lesson was ***learning to let go of what I could not change and move on***. In the first few days after I fell, I kept replaying in my mind the sequence of events that led to my fall. It was such a small step that I had missed. I kept asking myself – why had I not seen it? Why had I not been more

careful? If only, if only...but it was too late. I had missed one small step and the result was a fall, a fractured arm and an extended period of recuperation and some inconvenience. There was nothing I could now do about it – I could not re-live the moment and avoid the offending step; neither could I change the past.

But I soon realised that staying on the regret and “if-only” mode was not helpful at all. I was getting angry, feeling like a victim and wallowing in generous amounts of self-pity. I must have become quite annoying by the time my wife reminded me “not to be a baby” and to get back to what I could do rather than be sunk by what I could not change.

Wise woman – and she was so right, of course. I could not undo the past – but I have the now and the future to make a difference. And I should not squander them by repeatedly looking back in regret to the past, to something I cannot change or undo anymore.

In Philippians 3:13, the Apostle Paul, said it so well when he wrote: ***“I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead... (NIV)”*** Paul’s context for writing this may be very different from my own experience – but the life lesson regarding regret is the same. The past is over – and we certainly can and should learn from it – but we should never be trapped in it to the point that we miss the wonderful and fresh opportunities that God brings our way. Rather than keeping our eyes always on the rear-view mirror of life, our focus should be forward looking – what can we do now and in the future to make a difference with what we have. With such an attitude as individuals and as a community, we can be hopeful that the future is one where, truly, the best is yet to be.

Winston Hodge
Principal
Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)