



February 18, 2009 eLetter

A Tale of Two Men

Jeff Andrechyn, a friend and former US Airways pilot sent an e-mail to his friends sharing his heart's reaction to the CBS 60 Minute interview with Captain Chesley Sullenberger, known as "Sully". He was encouraged to submit his story to the Charlottesville, VA newspaper which he did. It appeared last Sunday and Jeff has been overwhelmed with e-mails and phone calls. It is a great glimpse into the glory of this man – Sully and Jeff.

Let me tell you something about Jeff's story before he gets into Sully's. Jeff was a successful 757 pilot. He loved his work – the responsibilities, the skills, the money and status. But, he developed an eye condition which forced him out. So he started to pursue his heart's desire, as best he understood it at the time, by meeting with men to help them navigate their life through this world with God. Jeff's passion and skill in "navigation" transitioned/deepened from airplanes to men. His loss became his gain. It is as Andrew Murray said,

"He brought me here. It's by His will I am in this straight place. In that fact I will rest. He will keep me here in His love and give me grace to behave as His child. Then He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn. In His good time, He will bring me out again- how and when He knows. So let me say: I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time."

Jeff has started an organization called Expeditions of the Heart (expeditionsoftheheart.org). And now, his article:

Sully's Opus

There is a wonderful movie you may have seen, Mr. Holland's Opus starring Richard Dreyfuss. Mr. Holland is a man who believes his destiny is to be a conductor who writes symphonies, but as life has it, he reluctantly takes a job as a high-school music teacher at a public school. Holland then has a boy who loses his ability to hear. The boy is deaf to his father's glory. The redemption in the movie comes at the end of Mr. Holland's career when the community celebrates his life with a surprise party where his former students venerate him with stories of how he changed their lives. It's a tearful moment when Mr. Holland finds out what his real "Opus" was. It was not a sheet of paper with notes on it, rather the hearts of all his former students who went on to be leaders in their community.

I was surprised watching 60 Minutes the other night at being moved to tears with the interview of Sully, the Hudson River pilot. Pilots are the least likely people to move your heart while telling a story, but there I was, in tears. There was this transcendent moment when Sully said, "I knew that all my life's training was for this moment".

It was beautiful.

Sully had some clarity on his life. Tragedy has a way of introducing us to ourselves and our deepest desires. Sully knew, even if for just a moment, the "why" of his life. When a life comes into that much clarity and things begin to make sense, it's like a broken bone gets set in the universe and the anguish is over and you have perspective.

It's what we all long for in our lives.

When I watched Sully talk about that five minute flight, I saw a man in his glory. We all have a glory to our lives. God is the father of glory and he doesn't mind passing that on to his kids. It is often hidden in the mundane routine of life but even though it might be obscure, it is still there. This event gave Sully a role to play, and he played it well and because of it his life's passion became known.

At the end of the interview, Sully and his crew met the passengers of US Airways flight 1549. It was Sully's "Mr. Holland's Opus" moment when the people, in tears, hugged him (which is unnatural for a former military pilot to hug someone) and thanked him for saving their lives.

I can only imagine what he was hearing;

Thank you for the months of training that took you away from your family.

Thank you for bearing the heart ache of missing significant events in your kids' lives while you were away at work.

Thank you for flying after the chaos of 9/11.

Thank you for staying sober when your retirement was taken away.

Thank you for the sleepless nights in strange hotels and answering the 4 am wake up calls.

Thank you for staring down that line of thunderstorms and prevailing yet again.

Thank you for sacrificing your body to cross all those time zones while eating airport food on the run.

Thank you for keeping it all together and being there for me when I needed you the most.

We can get so beaten down with life's daily assaults that we become deaf to the symphony of people that we have loved, forgiven, affirmed, validated, taught, and included in our lives. The world around us does change when we live like that.

I want to encourage the heroes out there who are covered with the dust of the mundane and are trying to keep it together. There is a weightiness and splendor to your life that for the most part is unseen.

You have a role to play in this great symphony of life. It's an important note; play it well.

Your day is coming.

Jeff Andrechyn

Airline Pilot and president of Expeditions of the Heart.