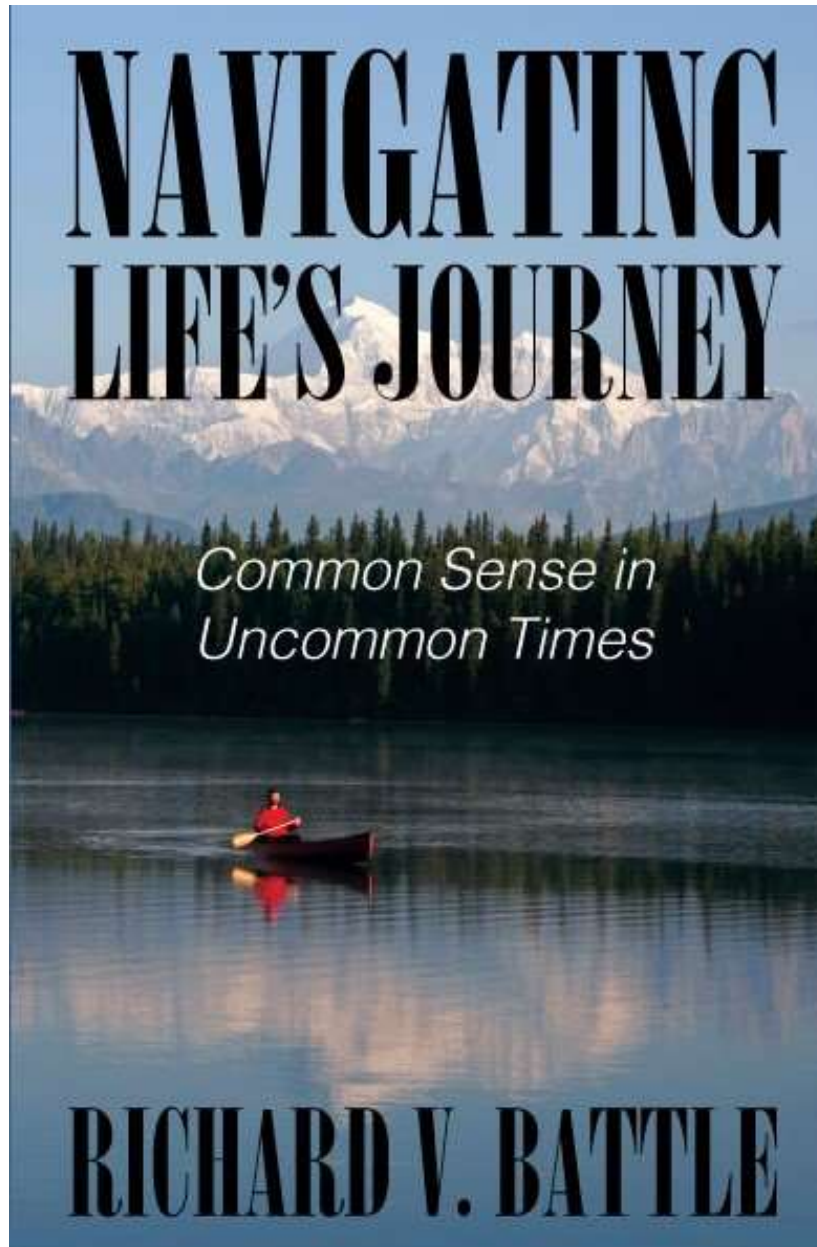


Thank you for subscribing to Richard V. Battle's newsletter

Below you will find 3 chapters from *Navigating Life's Journey: Common Sense in Uncommon Times*.

We hope you find it worthy of acquiring the complete volume!



What You Do When You Get Out of a Hole Is More Important Than How You Got into It!

When was the last time you found yourself in a hole with no perceived way out? How did you eventually make it out? Did you resume your previous course, or begin a new path? Can you look back and appreciate the lessons learned that improved your life?

We all find ourselves in a hole multiple times in our lives. Sometimes our actions caused our challenge, and sometimes circumstances occurred beyond our view and control.

Regardless, what we do once we find ourselves in the hole is what differentiates each of us in the resulting path moving forward. Can we extricate ourselves? Do we need assistance? Do we have to compromise our values?

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The first time I can remember being in a literal hole, I was about four or five years old. I was with my grandfather at the feed store. He was there for serious business, and I was there to get into trouble like any good young boy.

The next thing you know, I'm in a hole deeper than my height in the hopper for the feed grinder. I could not climb out of to escape on my own. It burned such an impression into my mind I can still envision that day, the store, and my trap.

I remember calling for help, and fortunately, my grandfather overcame his embarrassment and rescued me before the whole town of Commerce, Texas, heard my cries. Once I was asleep that evening, I'm sure my grandparents shared a good laugh over the entire episode.

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How we respond to the adversities or holes we experience will reshape our life journeys. Whether we escape a hole ourselves, or with assistance, our attitude will determine whether we turn the event into a positive contributor to our lives or an impediment. If we focus on how we arrived in a hole, we will entrap ourselves and restrict our growth. If we learn the lessons from the unpleasant experience and apply them as we proceed toward our goals, we will realize a much fuller life.

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The Frailty of Man

Pressure that results from adversity reveals our character.

We all fail under pressure some of the time;
Some of us fail under pressure all of the time.
Thankfully, we all don't fail under pressure all of the time;
Those successes under pressure build our society and forge progress.

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My long-time friend, Dr. George Lowe, is inspirational to me. We have belonged to the same church for many years and share a love for all Texas Longhorns sports.

George is a brilliant man who was a leading cardiologist in Austin, Texas, for many years. He is worthy of admiration for that accomplishment alone. His modesty limits the number of people who learn his story of becoming a doctor, which is phenomenal and encouraging to anyone who finds themselves in a hole or facing adversity.

Upon graduation from The University of Texas at Austin, George accepted a job with Humble Oil (now Exxon) in Baytown, Texas. During his performance review after his second year, it became apparent to everyone his progress was insufficient. As Will Rogers said, "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." George decided to stop digging the hole he was in as a chemical engineer.

Instead of responding negatively, blaming others, and masking the disappointment with destructive behavior, George resumed his studies in Austin, hoping to find his purpose in life.

A friend from his undergraduate days, Webb Ashley, asked George to tutor him in quantitative analysis so he could attend medical school. A passing statement from Webb that George should attend med school planted a seed into his sub-conscious. A week later, he happened to see a sign about the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), which is a requirement for acceptance to medical school, and he registered for the test.

George studied twelve hours a day for six weeks and prayed. He overcame a stutter that could have derailed med school, passed the interview, and spent the next eight years excelling at all of the requirements finishing first in the National Board Exam. In his fifty-year career, he performed 11,000 triumphant procedures as a cardiologist.

Imagine how many lives Dr. George Lowe improved directly and indirectly because he didn't allow that one hole, or any other, to define his life. Said differently by my friend J. Terry "Bubba" Bechtol, "The secret of success in life is not how many times that you get knocked down, but how many times that you get back up." Boy, did George Lowe get back up!

Webb Ashley, who never went to medical school, made what seemed to be an inadvertent comment that sparked an inspiration and contributed to an unimaginable number of lives. As I have written before, encouragement is the greatest gift we can give almost everyone.

Looking back, I can see people who influenced my life like Webb Ashley, and I would wager you can also.

How Can Our Time in a Hole Benefit our Future?

- **Will Rogers warning to stop digging when you're in a hole and compounding a problem is still valid.**
- **We only fail when we quit. Until then, there is always an opportunity to turn failure into success.**
- **Many times, our journey leads us to a different destination than we planned.**
- **We never know the number of people or the amount of impact we may have with a timely word of encouragement to others.**

Hopefully, we learn from each hole we fall into, and find ourselves in fewer of them as we proceed down life's path. How can we also listen and learn from others to respond to our challenges in a way that most benefits us and others whose lives we touch?

A Dream Delayed is Not a Dream Denied

What great dream have you delayed by other choices or circumstances beyond your control?

Too often, we fear a dream withheld to us, for one reason or another, will be denied to us for a lifetime. It does not have to be that way.

There are many examples from my personal experience, those who I know, and public figures. I hope you will visualize that sometimes the delay is beneficial for us, and all who we may touch when the dream finally is fulfilled.

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I attended a personal development course required by my company in 2002. The homework assignment for the next class was to write about one lesson I learned from my first job.

That evening, I couldn't sleep. The many lessons I learned as an eleven-year-old paperboy overcame me. Ideas raced through my mind. I wrote fourteen lessons I learned onto a tablet so I wouldn't forget them.

Since I was in the process of publicly sharing the experience of losing my son through *Surviving Grief by God's Grace*, I filed the piece of paper. Little did I know what would happen to it.

Four years later, time and space crossed paths. I stumbled across the paper while rummaging through my desk. When I reviewed what I had written down, I realized the lessons had been life-altering and positively impacted nearly every facet of my life.

Feeling the need to share my awakening with others, I wrote *The Four-Letter Word that Builds Character*.

So many people have shared with me their appreciation for the influence of the book on their lives. Those affirmations of my experience and undertaking inspire my efforts, to positively impact others.

I received the gift of the experience and story, but initiative and persistence were required to finish the book. Both characteristics demanded a positive attitude to overcome the foreboding that the time for the dream of telling the story had passed.

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There are many other examples, but I want to share two with you. The first is someone I know personally, and the other is one well-known worldwide by first name only.

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I met Jenine Lori at the 2019 Readers Favorite book award ceremony in Miami, Florida. She won the Bronze Medal for Children's – Religious Theme books for *Surprise, I have 3 Eyes!*

As Jenine and I discussed our books and the wonderful event **Readers Favorite** hosted to celebrate them, she shared her book was the result of a twelve-year-old dream. I was fascinated with her story and impressed as it made my four-year journey with *The Four-Letter Word that Builds Character* seem puny.

Below is her summary and the tremendous example of perseverance:

“In 2005, I was newly married and thinking of starting a family. I had been a teacher and visual artist but never considered writing. As I waited in the car to pick up my mother-in-law, rhythmical sentences began flooding my mind with powerful messages. I grabbed a notebook and wrote what came to me filling it in no time. Later, I shared my stories with others who agreed they were destined to be children's books.

I read the stories to my stepson, who loved their enchantment. Encouraged by the reception of the stories, and after months of research, I submitted my manuscript to several publishing companies and waited. Time past and I heard nothing. Months became years and the birth of a child took precedence in my life. The stories were forgotten.

Ten years later, I was going through a challenging process and began to question things. I felt unfulfilled and desired to live a more fulfilling life with a higher purpose. I wanted to contribute more to others, which would provide me immense joy.

Remembering the stories I had written years before, I relocated the manuscript and cried when I reread it. The stories were as magical as I remembered. I knew my new purpose was to write consciousness-raising awareness books for children!

Inspired to seize the moment, I authored, illustrated, and independently published my first children's book, *Surprise; I have 3 eyes!* two years later.

It became a #1 international bestseller, won numerous international book awards and was featured as the #1 book in the U.K. for children with special needs. It continues reaching around the world inspiring uniqueness, creativity, and the belief anything is possible!

The moral my story is: **“When we dream, believe in life's magic, and trust our ability to make our dreams a reality, everything and anything is possible!”**

I met so many astonishing people at the event. My appreciation, respect, and admiration for their creativity, dedication, and effort grew exponentially.

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Few had ever heard the name of Daniel Ruettiger, except for Notre Dame football fans, when the movie *Rudy* burst onto the scene in the fall of 1993. His life-long dream was to play football for Notre Dame, but everyone and everything told him he would never fulfill his dream. He was too small, too slow, and an average student.

If he listened to the voices, few beyond his family and friends would know of him and receive inspiration from his incredible journey and accomplishment. It is a true story that is stranger than fiction.

Now recognizable throughout the world by his nickname, **Rudy**, he shares his story of persistence, patience, grit, determination, intrepidity, and never quit attitude as a public speaker to inspire others, to relentlessly pursue their dreams. The road he successfully navigated to reach this point is beyond belief.

Dyslexia impaired his formal studies, and he joined the United States Navy upon his high school graduation. After a two-year hitch, he spent the next two years working in an industrial plant. When others would discard their dream, Rudy maintained his despite others calling him foolish to do so.

Since he didn't qualify academically for Notre Dame, he first entered Holy Cross College to prove he could complete college-level academic work and raise his grades. After two years and three rejections, he gained acceptance to his beloved Notre Dame.

Six years removed from high school, Rudy was finally a student at Notre Dame and earnestly began his pursuit as a walk-on football player. Overcoming financial challenges by working on campus, and his small stature with dogged determination, he finally rewarded to play, for the last game in 1975.

History records his twenty-seven seconds of playtime, including sacking the opposing quarterback, created such excitement, he rode off of the field on the shoulders of his teammates.

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We will never achieve all of our dreams, but that realization is no reason not to pursue your dreams until their achievement, or we leave this earth. Even if we don't achieve a dream, it is almost a certainty that we will accomplish more than if we never pursued the goal at all.

Two quotes I find encouraging are:

“Don't quit until every base is uphill.” – Babe Ruth

“It is better to aim at the sky and strike an eagle than to aim at the eagle and strike a rock.” – Native American proverb

What great dream do you hold deep inside your soul? Is it one you have regarded in the past tense because you have relegated it as unachievable? How will your mood and actions change if you acknowledge until your life is over you still may achieve it? What can you do today to rekindle it and keep its embers burning until the day you can celebrate its achievement?

My desire is each of you experience the awakening of your dreams, and your life's journey is more fruitful in their pursuit.

Privileged

Have you determined which privilege you should renounce because of your guilt yet? I am guilty of one privilege I refuse to surrender.

My mother used to tell me as a youngster how fortunate I was to live in The United States. Like many children, I assumed I was entitled to what I had received, and most people around the globe lived similar lives. As I matured and traveled the world, my appreciation for my mother's teaching increased.

I'm thankful my formal education occurred before today's partisan brawls to influence curriculum's based on politics and vast sums of money. Both major political parties agreed on the country's founding and its exceptional nature-based on God's gift. Most people cherished The Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, the flag, our national anthem, and the benevolence we shared from our bounty toward other countries.

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We live in interesting times. Instead of focusing on what unites us and our contributions to build a "more perfect union" as stated as the first objective in the Preamble of The United States Constitution, people divide into groups and attack others. Most of us never dreamed party politics would result in separating us from our defining principles. There is much more that unites us than divides us.

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Yes, we're privileged how our founders prepared, deliberated, and declared independence based on ideals with logic and reason instead of the emotion found in the French revolution occurring shortly after.

Thirteen disparate colonies overcame their differences to unite against the tyranny of King George III of England. Fifty-six men risked not only their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" if the effort failed. They not only risked everything for liberty but suffered greatly to lay the foundation of our privilege.

Nine died fighting or from hardship, twelve had their homes pillaged and destroyed by the British, five were captured and tortured before dying, two lost sons, another had two sons captured, and others lost wives and fortunes.

The war lasted for seven years and cost about 25,000 lives of people who sacrificed but never breathed the air of liberty resulting from their gift to us.

The Articles of Confederation was the first government enacted after securing our freedom but failed after a few years.

Our current Constitution was authored in 1787, but not without many disagreements and compromises. Slavery was codified to secure the necessary votes for passage, but for the first time, a republic securing rights for individuals and limiting the rights of government was legislated. Our gift of privilege as free citizens with the power and responsibility to restrict governments from enslaving us was delivered.

Benjamin Franklin knew the tendency for governments to enlarge their power at the expense of the individual. On exiting the hall after concluding the Constitution's creation, a woman asked him, "Dr. Franklin, what kind of government have you given us"? He replied, "a republic if you can keep it."

Our forefathers after Franklin remained true to our founding principles and have bequeathed to us through additional sacrifice this unique to the world gift.

For more than two hundred years, efforts were made at various speeds to make our union more perfect. About six hundred thousand died to end slavery in a war lasting four years. The vote was extended to women. The effort continues.

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Like all worthy ideals, those enumerated in the Declaration of Independence are unachievable by imperfect human beings.

It does not mean we should not relentlessly pursue them. We should celebrate progress toward their achievement, and learn from the shortcomings of our efforts.

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Today, the politician's quest for power, the corrupting influence of money at all levels of society, but especially in public administration have overwhelmed principle.

Generations of freedom, wealth, and minimal sacrifice have resulted in people believing the price of freedom was paid forever. That attitude threatens our future and that of our children!

What should we do to terminate our current decline and resume our individual and national ascent?

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How Do We Use our American Privilege to Repay the Gift?

- **Appreciate the gift of liberty we have been given.**
- **Recognize our country isn't a perfect one but is exceptional.**
- **Overcome the perception we can't make a difference in improving the future.**
 - Sydney Smith said, "It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing. Do what you can."
- **Determine where and how we can best contribute our efforts.**
- **Educate our children and grand-children on the sacrifice of so many resulting in our liberty.**
- **Remind others freedom is bought one generation at a time, and it is our responsibility now.**
- **Encourage people to show-up, stand-up, and speak-up to defend our gift against all who seek to destroy it for ideals that have never worked anywhere in the world.**

We stand on the shoulders of giants, though imperfect, whose gift to us will be in vain if we do not extend it to the next generations.

As my late friend, mentor, and Texas Attorney General and Secretary of State John Ben Shepperd stated, **"To be born free is an accident. To live free is a responsibility. But, to die free is an obligation."**

We who are citizens by birth, or by naturalization, should realize the accident that deposits us in a free land. Every day; internal and external, seen and unseen threats to our freedom rob us of our liberty.

Each of us will choose our actions to ensure breathing our last breath as a free person. None of us can assure our success in the effort, but if every one of us relentlessly work daily toward liberty, success will inevitably occur for us all.

For more information visit – www.richardbattle.com

Thank you for your interest!

