

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Life's Moments

I was pleased following our 57th Annual IFEA Convention & Expo in Denver, Colorado, to have a number of people request that I share my opening comments. The following (sans accompanying power-point show) is an edited version of those comments. I wish everyone a Happy Holiday Season and a Happy New Year full of many special and memorable moments.



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While talking with Eric Fournier, Executive Producer for the 'Moment Factory' about some of their projects and events - most of you probably saw their Super Bowl XLVI halftime show with Madonna in February of this year, but you may not have experienced or be aware of their many other amazing projects and events - large and small, such as the interactive musical wall that they created for Ste-Justine Children's Hospital in Montreal - I was reminded of all the moments that surround us every day - some passing without recognition; others touching our lives forever. And I was reminded of the unique responsibility and opportunities that we, in our industry, have all been given to create those moments for families, friends, individuals and the communities that we serve. But to do that well, we must first recognize and appreciate just what we are talking about impacting.

In the tradition of the memorable George Carlin, let's 'take a moment' to realize just what an important role moments play in the world around us:

- Whatever it may be, we'll do that task 'when we get a moment'.
- We 'just need a moment to ourselves'; preferably 'a quiet moment'; a 'moment of privacy'; even though we know that moments with others can often become our most 'treasured moments'; 'golden moments'; possibly 'everlasting moments'.

- In the course of our day we may experience 'funny moments'; 'embarrassing moments'; 'scary moments'; 'amazing moments'; 'difficult moments'; 'surprising moments'; and even 'Oprah moments'.
- We have our 'moments of introspection'; 'moments of decision'; 'moments of obligation'; 'moments of truth'; and 'moments of pride'.
- We can 'take a moment to remember', if we are not 'busy at the moment'; but not to worry if we are, because we'll 'be back in just a moment'.
- We have 'senior moments'; 'aha moments'; 'romantic moments'; 'defining moments'; 'religious moments'; 'eye-opening moments'; 'tender moments'; 'moments of reason'; 'moments of clarity'; and 'oh, crap, moments'.
- So as not to risk losing it, we often try to 'capture the moment'.
- We ask if people can't 'give me just a moment'.
- We remember 'the moment I first saw her/him'.
- We reflect upon 'iconic moments', 'tragic moments', and 'great moments in history'.
- We tell others that "it wasn't all that great, but it had its moments".
- And most of us have 'moments we'd like to forget'.
- We sometimes get around to things at 'the last moment'.
- We share what happened 'at that moment'.

- We make decisions of 'great moment'.
- And sometimes we are fortunate enough to get our 'moment in the sun'.

By definition a 'moment' is "an important or significant time or occasion; a brief period of excellence or interest"; and that is where our industry comes in, because we all know that in a 'moment' anything is possible. All of you, and your peers around the world, every day, are responsible for moments of every imaginable scale and magnitude; usually highly positive. You create, inspire, set the stage for, build upon, make possible and share:

- Olympic moments
- Global moments
- Magical moments
- Disney moments
- Life-changing moments
- 'Kodak moments' (remember those?)
- Family moments
- Festive moments
- Moments of celebration
- Moments of community bonding
- That 'one special moment'
- That 'one moment in time'
- And best of all, we get to create 'unforgettable moments' (until the moment that we top ourselves again)

But to do that, we have to clearly recognize what we do and commit ourselves to the levels of quality, creativity,

and dedication that it takes to produce those special end products; those special moments.

We must identify those partners who care as much about creating those moments as we do and encourage them to join us in building our visions: city officials, sponsors, volunteers, media, suppliers, and tourism organizations.

Muhtar Kent, the CEO of Coca-Cola, in an interview with CNN last July was asked why his company sponsors the Olympics and how they quantify the return on their investment. His response stood out to me and I hope to others as well, when he replied, and I paraphrase:

"I couldn't see a better fusion of our ideals, values and the opportunity to bring communities from all around the world together; that's very much in line with our own values, beliefs and heritage. With regard to return, we can count many things – media mentions, web hits, sales, relationships – but I think it is wrong to quantify everything in the world of marketing, in the world of branding. We must ensure that we still create positive moments and emotions with consumers."

Find those sponsors and protect those relationships.

At a time, worldwide, when cities are struggling and decisions are being made to cut budgets at every level, there are cities who recognize the powerful role that events play in protecting and supporting the quality of life in their communities and who, instead of pulling back, are actively revisiting and strengthening their partnerships with those in our industry, assuring that those critically important community events and bonding moments don't disappear. Support those cities and efforts and encourage your own communities to emulate their successes and commitment.

And, just like our sponsors and our cities, please don't mistake the

suppliers to our industry as anything less than full and committed partners to your success. If you are truly committing yourself to the quality, creativity and dedication that you will need to create those special 'moments', you will need to work with those who are just as committed and passionate as you are. The suppliers and professionals who support the IFEA and our members, every day, have already proven their commitment to our industry. Show your support for them and your event by exploring what they can bring to your table.

My mother past away ten years ago and I was recently going through some boxes of her personal keepsakes for a family ancestry project that I am working on. As I did so, I was reminded again, as I was when she passed away, of just how many of her photographs, keepsakes, and memories with friends and family revolved around events.

In West Virginia, where I grew up, we always attended the Sternwheel Regatta Festival, where the big paddlewheel boats – overflowing with people and music – raced down our river, using the bridges as start and finish lines; and tugboats would engage in shoving contests. We saw John Denver first perform his hit "Country Roads" on the steps of our capital building during a state celebration event.

Mom and her friends would go to neighboring Ohio to "Bob Evans Farms" (they own the Bob Evans Restaurant chain, if you are familiar with those) where they would load chickens into giant mailboxes, shoot a cannon to scare them, and see which one flew the furthest (probably not a big favorite of the folks at PETA). She and her friends went to 'Bridge Day' at the New River Gorge Bridge, where, once a year they held a celebration and you could walk across the highest bridge in North America. And my parents used to take us down in the middle of the night to watch the circus animals unload from train cars and parade to the venue where they would perform.

Those, and many other similar examples, are the things that she remembered; and that we now remember doing with her. Those were 'our moments'.

And I was recently a part of the 'Spirit of Boise Balloon Classic' - an event that I helped to start 21 years ago in our city. On an early morning in the park, as the sun was just coming up over the mountains and the balloons were filling the park and sky with color, I noticed a man in a bath robe holding the hand of his young daughter, also in her pajamas; the dew had soaked about two inches of their pajama pant legs. I assume they lived nearby and I imagined the little girl making her dad get up to go see the balloons before they launched and flew away, with no time to get dressed and fully ready. I admired his willingness and understanding of the importance to do so. They were sharing a very special moment that neither of them will ever forget.

And the people who create and support those moments – large and small, from around the globe – are those whom we have the pleasure of representing and supporting through the IFEA. Your professional peers; your friends; those whom we look to when we need support and new ideas; motivation and inspiration.

As we start a new year, we are all provided with a whole new set of opportunities to create those special moments – for individuals, for families, for friends, for the communities that we serve. For ourselves, our staffs, our events, and our organizations. If you were waiting for it to be clearly identified, this is our moment. Our moment to learn, to build; to imagine; to create; to plan; to share; to help; to provide your own unforgettable, perhaps career or life-changing moment; or perhaps, to change the world.

I wish you and yours a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2013. Take time to savor the moment.