

The Berthoud Pass Lesson of Life



By Frosty Wooldridge

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For the next six weeks, I'll be on the road from the Midwest to the West Coast. I will be researching the homeless nightmares in Chicago, Detroit, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Possibly in St. Louis and Atlanta! I'm going to take pictures of the homeless camps by the thousands. I am going to report on our overwhelmed national parks...the gridlock, the parking lots loaded beyond capacity, trying to see Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park, but you can't even get close. I'm going to dig into what went wrong with America and how much worse it's going to become. Let's face the facts, Joe Biden and our elected leaders are pulling our country out from under us.

At the same time, I'm going to share with you many positive aspects of American life.

One of my dearest friends, Keith Cooper, lives in Winter Park, Colorado. He and I ski, hike and climb together. He's nearly my age with incredible world travel. We spoke on the "Berthoud Pass Lesson" for our lives.

Keith Cooper said, "I was feeling a bit anxious, it was a Sunday and all I could think about was everything I had to do and where I needed to go tomorrow—Monday—The dreaded first day of the working week. After I internalized what I wrote below, I cancelled my Monday appointments and just slept in."

He continued, "I was reading an article by my friend Frosty Woolridge, a well-known author of twenty-four books, seventeen of which are published. Many of his publications are about his travels and life on six continents. This article, though, was about the happiness factor and was a short comparison on the life in Bhutan and the United States. While reading and agreeing with Frosty's findings I was struck by the passage: "How fast do we really need to go to get there?" Now the mechanical part of me quickly said, "It depends on how much time you have."

"My anti-heart, sometimes called my brain, quickly did some calculations to lead me to believe that my speed of getting there is a factor on the time I have, i.e., I don't want to be late. So, if I have an hour to go 60 miles on I-70, I need to go 60 mph to get where I am going. Or better yet, if I only have 50 minutes, I need to go 70 mph and then I have an excuse to go fast, right? But wait, Frosty said, 'How fast do we really need to go to get there, get there!' There was no time constraint, so why did I allow my brain, my anti-heart, to put a time constraint in?

"My heart says if we need to be there by a certain time, a time that requires us to go fast, go straight and not pay attention to the journey. Hmmm, isn't the journey part of the travel? I mean if we were on the Starship Enterprise then we could go to the Transporter room and get beamed anywhere, right? But we don't have a Transporter room, we have roads, we have communities along those roads, we have people in those communities, and we have potential memories we could make with those people in those communities. So, maybe if we solely focus on getting there, then maybe we should not go at all.

"For Frosty's point, so well stated is, "It's not the miles you make... it's the pictures, conversations, spiritual awakening along the way." It took me 50 years to realize I could never do meaningful engagement by going fast. It made me think, I spent the first six years of my life in elementary

school, I had five teachers (yes, I was held back in the 5th grade) and a severe speech impediment, I stuttered. I still remember each of my five elementary school teachers, to include Ms. Williams, my 4th grade teacher whom I had a crush on. It traumatized me when one day in 1969 there was a man in our classroom standing against the wall, an Air Force Staff Sergeant whom she introduced as her fiancé. It took me years to get over that heartache.

“Anyway, back to the subject of going fast. My point is I can identify each one of my elementary school teachers, I can picture them in my mind, even the assistant to Ms. Allen my first-grade teacher at Denali Elementary. I took things slow; my ambition was to learn and improve. On the flip side, my rise in the corporate world was fast and I probably cannot name ten customers or even ten office mates if given time. I should have used the lessons learned in elementary school to better learn my environment, to enjoy the journey and not look to the destination, to just slow down.

“As I now sit in my home in Grand County, CO, I’m reminded of a trip I take several times a month up and down Berthoud Pass. Some don’t like Berthoud Pass, its windy, somewhat steep and it can be intimidating. But Berthoud Pass is a wonderful drive if you pay attention to the road and not your cell phone alone. Its beauty is unmatched, and the Colorado Road Crew keep the pass in great shape all year-round. But the Pass teaches every driver a lifelong important lesson. You see going up the hill there are two lanes, you can pass, jockey in and out even stop to take a picture. The lanes are wide, paved, safe, wonderful. But once you crest the top of the hill, well, there is only one lane down. So regardless of how fast you made it up the hill, you’re only going to go as fast as the person in front of you down the hill. Isn’t that what life teaches us?

“For now, let’s think about living where we are, with whom we

love, with who we are and when we do venture out, lets enjoy the journey to our destination. God knows, my friend Frosty gets an A+ for always abiding and living by that belief; I am now one of his faithful students.

“Think of a time you were in a hurry and passed someone only to arrive at the same destination, how did you feel when you both arrived and looked at one another, maybe a bit embarrassed?”

As you can tell, Keith Cooper thinks deeply. We have more conversations coming your way. Hope this helps you along your life-path.

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