

THRILLS

By Fred Hobbs

How many incidents in a person's life can be said to have been truly thrilling?

That question popped up in my mind recently upon reading the message in a fortune cookie. Mine contained the joyous news that "a thrilling time is ahead for you."

In assessing my "thrill scale", it didn't take long to discover that most of my thrills came earlier in my life. My first roller coaster ride, my first airliner trip (boy, are those trips no longer thrilling), the first time I held a girl friend's hand and, yes, later..much later..at the occasion of my first sexual experience. I was thrilled, of course, as my wife and I marveled at the sight of our first- born child. We were jointly thrilled when all three of our children graduated from college and when they married and had children, we were thrilled to be grandparents.

Sometimes one person's thrill is another person's "so what". Shaking John F. Kennedy's hand when he was campaigning in Colorado was a thrill for me, but not to my Republican cousin. When I was 15 years old, playing golf with my brothers, I made a hole-in-one. That was a very unexpected thrill that has evaded me ever since. The first time I was on the air, alone in the studio at the radio station where I worked brought the thrill of the fact that my voice was going out to thousands (okay, maybe hundreds) of listeners.

The genuine thrills have tapered off now, unless you consider it is always a thrill to be still alive and in generally good health.

The whole exercise conjures up other questions. Have I been a good enough citizen of the world to deserve another thrill? May I consider being able to take care of my bodily functions a thrill? If I lose the ten pounds my doctor says I should, would that be a thrill?

And, what about the fortune cookie guru? How does he or she know a thrilling time is ahead for me? About to enter an eighth decade, surely I have used up my allotment of thrills. Haven't I had a lot of "been there, done that's? What else can I be thrilled to experience, or observe?

If the cookie prognostication is correct, the thrill will have to be a surprise. I am truly hard pressed to think of another thrill I really covet. The prospect of future thrills perhaps is somewhat akin to the now common term "bucket list." In that case, I have a couple of widely disparate things I'd like to experience that aren't exactly thrilling, but are possible and, in one case, even commendable. I'd like to attend a bar or bat mitzvah and I'd like to take a ride on a glider, slipping easily, noiselessly through the air.

Do you suppose those two actually could qualify as thrilling among fortune cookie messages or is it considered good form to even ask what the thrill should be?

If it makes any difference, I'd settle for just one more thrill. Maybe the glider pilot could land and drop me off at the site of the "coming of age" ceremony!