

WHAT IF..... By Fred Hobbs

The English poet Percy Shelley passed along some good advice in one of his works the essence of which was that past experience is a good pathway toward the future so that a person may “profit by his errors and derive experience from his follies.”

In writing about the assigned topic “What if.....”, it strikes me that it is important to consider the “what ifs” of the past in formulating dreamy and fanciful “what ifs” of the future. And, of course, there are pleasant “what ifs” and very negative and even frightful “what ifs.”

What if Hitler and Hirohito had won World War II? What if “Rock and Roll” had never become popular? Especially for the younger crowd, what if Ozzie Osborne and the Kardashians had never been born? And, what if we had never traveled to the moon? There was a time not long ago when the question was “What if we could perform such a feat?” That question has not only been asked, but answered.

Now scientists, engineers, inventors, researchers and, yes, even dreamers are busy asking the “what if” question. It is especially gratifying that medical research is seeking answers to curb or eliminate the devastation and heartbreak caused by cancer, Alzheimer’s disease and a myriad of other maladies. Every day researchers are asking: What if we try this approach? What if we use this new drug? Unless by pure chance, only by asking the question repeatedly will solutions be found.

Looking back, “what if” questions abound, closely followed by “if onlies.”

In my personal situation, I have asked myself, “What if I had married that kookie and slightly disturbed girl in Wyoming that I actually became engaged to instead of the beauty from Illinois who became the love of my life? I shudder at the thought. What if we had not been blessed with three bright and largely successful children? It’s too much to ask what if they were all brilliant and perfect in every way! And, of course five grandchildren, all of whom are truly grand and deserve to be spoiled by granddad.

And what would have happened if I had not turned down a promising job offer in Washington, D.C. years ago? Possibly a chance at more recognition and more money, but knowing what’s occurring there now, it was a wise choice to stay in Denver.

“What ifs” can be sad. A thought that will never leave me is “what if my beloved wife had not been a victim of Alzheimer’s? If only there was a cure she could have had many more good years to share with me.

At this stage in life, the number of future what-ifs is limited for me. I havederived valuable experience from those follies that Shelley wrote about, but also gained great satisfaction from the many opportunities afforded me. Let the fertile minds, ingenuity and persistence of the next generations be successful in turning many more “what-ifs” into “what-ares.”