

## THE LIMITS OF TRUST

By Fred Hobbs

“Who Do You Trust?” That was the slightly ungrammatical name of a daytime 1950s-60s TV show, which for most of its run, featured an MC named Johnny Carson and his sidekick, announcer Ed McMahon. (History records that they went on to enjoy greater achievements!) The program, with married pairs of contestants, originally was titled “Do You Trust Your Wife?” with obvious tones of chauvinism that would be totally and rightfully rejected here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Deciding to trust or not to trust a person or a group can be a most difficult task.

Trust has its limits. Novelist Ernest Hemingway seemed to make some sense when he wrote, “The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.”

That surely worked in my marriage of 47 years. As a widower now, I no longer enjoy that special type of intimate shared trust. Still, in my daily life, are my children, grandchildren, extended family and good friends I trust. In a recent serious medical episode, the trust I placed in the surgeon who operated on me has proven to be justified. I have made a successful recovery.

Unfortunately, however, trust is not in large supply in certain corners of that crazy world out there. Crooked, evil, venal and self-centered politicians, businessmen and women, used car sales people, TV pitchmen, even a few in the clergy are at work constantly pushing my trust meter down to a very low register.

Sadly, also, elements of trust upon which a person depends, but has no control over, can disappear.

This past year, life’s cycle was responsible for a loss of three of my trusted friends. Within a few weeks of each other, Joe and Dick passed away. I had known both of them since fourth grade in elementary school. They were the kind of friends who shared the joys and sorrows of a lifetime. Each lived several hundred miles away, but kept in communication about children, jobs, trips, the “good old days” and some of the bad. They could be trusted to give condolences, congratulations, advice and counsel if needed.

Bob, the third longtime friend, was my roommate in the Army. I wrote a story about him several months ago when it was apparent he was dying of pancreatic cancer. He lived on the east coast, but we wrote frequently and talked on the phone at least once a month, especially when e-mail and unlimited long distance calls became available. With our respective wives, we had two personal visits together, one in New York and one in Denver. When my wife was stricken with Alzheimer’s disease, Bob was that trusted friend to whom I could reveal my thoughts and emotions in the long road that unfolds in the course of that disease. Ironically, his wife later also was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and now is in assisted living... and my trusted friend Bob is gone.

Some people confuse trust with faith. By a standard dictionary listing of synonyms, trust relates to confidence; faith to loyalty. The distinctions are not really important, though. Maybe it should be left to Shakespeare to put a finer point on the subject of trust. In *All’s Well That Ends Well*, the Bard declares: “Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.”