

THE END IS NOT THE REWARD

By Fred Hobbs

In considering the topic of “reward”, I can’t recall ever receiving any monetary reward. I’ve never captured one of the FBI’s “Ten Most Wanted” criminals, spotted such a miscreant or gained any knowledge of his or her whereabouts that I could pass along.

Although I have lost or misplaced items from time to time, none of them have been worth the price of a reward for their return. I don’t regard the “free” airline miles I receive for using my credit card as rewards. The cost of that is wrapped into the fare one must pay for those trips.

Rewards don’t just come in the form of dollars and cents or tangible recognition from a loved one, a friend, a colleague or an organization. Writer Anne Lamott reminds those of us who enjoy putting one word after another in a story, poem, song lyric or even a business report, that writing can be a reward in itself.

“I still encourage anyone who feels at all compelled to write to do so,” she says.

“Writing has so much to give, so much to teach, so many surprises. That thing you had to force yourself to do—the actual act of writing—turns out to be the best part. It’s like discovering that while you thought you needed the tea ceremony for the caffeine, what you really needed was the tea ceremony. The act of writing turns out to be its own reward.”

While the act of writing is indeed rewarding to me, other non-economic rewards are even more important.

My long and happy marriage to a wonderful partner was a reward that I still can savor, despite the fact that a terrible disease cut short her life. Her death robbed me of the continued satisfaction and pleasure derived from that reward.

My children have rewarded me, not only with *their* personal achievements in life, but with grandchildren who bring joy to their grandpa without the concomitant responsibilities of parenthood.

Skirting the risks of being a hopeless Pollyanna, a case can be made that even adversity and failure has its rewards. Being fired at age fifty-two certainly didn’t seem like a personal reward. A good friend at the time remarked that one day I would find that jolt to my ego and potentially to my wallet was the best thing that ever happened to me. Long wishing to work for myself, I finally took the plunge and opened my own public relations business. While the venture was not as much “fun” as my stint in broadcasting, the move turned out to be even more lucrative and a thoroughly satisfying experience. It opened a new path to retirement looming about fifteen years down the road. And, I learned a new skill: how to operate a business.

A final thought on this subject that seems to have more than a few divergent views, comes

from author Jamie Magee.

“The end is not the reward; the path you take with the emotions that course through you as you grasp life—that is the reward.”