

On Change

By Jeff Swanson, OAWU Circuit Rider

By the time you all read the article, the changes in the seasons will more than evident. That is to say most or all of the leaves on the trees will be history. However, as I look out my window now, the leaves are a striking cornucopia of colors and crunchy textures. The air feels cooler than past weeks. When most of us have basked in the warm comforts of 80 – 90 degree temperatures for the summer months, Mother Nature has been preparing for some major changes. The nature of this article is not merely focused on the colors of the leaves...oh no! That is only a small but indicative sense of what is part of the grand scheme of things when it pertains to change. Let's look at some of the things that are pertinent to the various aspects of change and you can decide if change is good for you...or inevitable.

On business: Do you remember your first job? Did you think, "Wow, this is the only place I ever want to be. My boss is paying me \$12,000.00 (more or less) per year and everyone is so nice. I can afford just about anything I could ever want. The future is mine." As time went on, did you say, "Why am I working so hard when it seems that other people I know have so much extra time to go out and have fun? Perhaps I need to re-think this job...and then again...it pays the bills." For those of us that have struggled or are still struggling with such ideas, I invite you to think of possible alternatives that would otherwise further enhance your standard of living. Most of us that go to work everyday generally get into a routine. This routine can lead to our success or our demise. I have heard it said that "Successful people do the things that failures have refused to do." There are tons of 'self-help' articles supposedly available to help us to become rich and famous. What am I doing for my retirement? Should I be meeting more successful people? Shouldn't I be making more money? What about my mental and physical well being? Stress is not a good thing! At the same time others offer the hope of being 'buff' and slender. The diet industry has more than likely touched one of us at any given time for better or worse. I am delighted to say I've lost and gained the same amount every time...and why would I not wish to be in a constant state of dynamic equilibrium? It has been said that the Dead Sea is dead because everything flows into it

and nothing flows out. If our businesses (i.e. water systems) were to be operated in such a way, the immediate recipe for success might be greatly diminished. What I mean is to compare the old adage, "Well, I've been doing this the same way for 50 years." The problem with this way of thinking is that the particular person or business doing the same thing for the 50 years the same way... may have been doing the same thing the wrong way for 50 years!

How about those rates that council approved 10 years ago and is still the same 10 years later? Has there been a pro-active approach to depreciating the infrastructure that is doomed to deterioration? "When you think of it, those pipes are not a problem, yet...sure, our leaks amount to only about 20%." Have the valves and hydrants been exercised on a regular basis. Is the treatment system able to keep up with the requirements necessary to meet the new regulations? Why not wait until that day comes? The council doesn't want too many changes at one time because it of course means extra money...more expenditure...more...more...."if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Please don't misunderstand my intentions by these comments. They are not meant to intimidate anyone making the choice to change, not change, or just keep everything status quo. My intentions with these comments however, are meant to strike an element of thought. Do you ever find that thinking is a tenuous activity? You might want to 'change' the way you think about that. Please keep in mind that every night the sun goes down and the next morning the sun comes up...even on a cloudy day. That's right; certain things that surround us in life are quite involuntary. Other things are definitely items of choice. What a nice thought. We can make such a difference in life, in our businesses, in our relationships, in our thought processes and behaviors, and lifestyles.

On life: As it has been said there are only 2 things in life that you will ever have to do. One is pay taxes and the other is dying. Wow, that's it? Sounds futile to me! Why is it important to realize the aspect of choice? I believe that after being around a few decades (or so); I have realized the term 'have' to should be changed to 'choose' to. When I was 8 years old, I got off of the school bus and started up the hill to my house. My dad came down to meet me and said that he had some bad

news. He told me that my grandfather had 'passed away'. (Now-a-days I wonder if there is a better way of saying that). All I knew was I wanted to change the situation but as the tears welled up in my eyes, I realized that to be a futile outcome. My grandfather who was the favorite person in my life was gone and there was not a single thing I could do. I asked my dad if we could go back to the hospital and get him back. There should have been something we could have done. But dad assured me that when this kind of thing happens, it's final.

To this day, I don't go through a single day without thinking about what kinds of things I can change and make a difference with. Now, I have grandchildren. When I consider the enormous influence that I have on them, I can't help but think...I need to be the best I can be. We all have that chance to have a positive effect on each other and often don't realize those whom we have left a lasting mark on. Could that other person be your wife?...your kids or grandkids?...or co-workers, or boss?...how about the neighbor or stranger that asked you for some spare change?...or teachers...friends...or fellow members of your religious community?

Whether or not it exists in your professional life or personal life, the articles of change are at your doorstep at all hours of the day. To attempt to avoid change may possibly result in negative results. As I've stated, there are some things we have control over and others not. Please keep in mind the changes you make in your life can result in remarkable changes in your business, family, and society. There are many times when none of us have the ability to affect change but if we chose to not deal with the potential results, we may find ourselves going through some changes less desirable than those we could have initiated in the first place.

The leaves are a bit more orange and yellow than they were yesterday. There are fewer on the tree today. I think that there will soon be none on the branches in a few weeks. It sure is nice to know that next spring will bring new growth and the warm whispers of summer will help them grow. Change is inevitable. What would you like to change?