



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THE CLAIRE DIARIES

4TH QUARTER 2006

Hi Folks,

Before we start the 4Q ~ 2006 diaries I have a couple small housekeeping announcements.

Something I have wanted to do for a long time is "Pictures of the Quarter". Just like The Diaries these 5 - 10 pictures are a mixture of business and personal that I feel are worth sharing. They will come out each quarter along with the diaries. I invite you to view them at <http://www.rxforcatering.com/diaries.php>.

Second announcement is that I am doing the "mature adult thing" by weeing myself off of AOL. If you folks could start emailing me at cgould@rxforcatering.com ~ I would greatly appreciate it. I will also put it at the bottom of my emails as well. This one is going to take time and is going to be a hard one.

Last, please do take the time to read the diaries even if you have to save them and read in a couple of sessions.

Drum roll on the 2006 year-end diaries. I asked folks to participate in sharing with all the other readers on what YOU have learned this past year. Some of the entries will make you laugh, make you cry, or allow you to appreciate what you have in front of you. Without further ado...

I've been thinking about this and what I've decided is that it isn't what I "learned"...it is what I "affirmed."

1. There is a purpose for everything and even though we don't recognize it when it happens....it will eventually reveal itself.
2. Having people around that love you is better than anything you can ever imagine.
3. When things don't go well, refer to point one.

Larry Hice
Executive Director, Sales and Marketing Support
VSSM
General Motors
Detroit, Michigan

"The More I know, the less I understand"

Todd Vansooy ~ Sharing Don Henley's wisdom
Director - Sales and Marketing Operations
Honeywell Aerospace
Torrance, California

What have I learned in 2006:

Claire, as you know, I retired from GWCC in 2004 and have been teaching in the School of Hospitality at Georgia State University. In addition to teaching, I have been involved in several consulting opportunities one of which is assisting an organization in management techniques. This organization has absolutely nothing to do with hospitality, but I have learned the basic tenants of running a hospitality business or organization has very pronounced application to this group's culture, management practices, employee and customer relations.

In hospitality, we always wear our "game face" and this desire to serve others with the best in friendly, courteous service becomes our behavior and makes our industry a fun and exciting place to work. Although we are not immune from typical employee-employer work related problems, for the most part people in hospitality tend to treat each other as their customers (i.e. "internal customers") and this relationship helps hospitality organizations to grow and thrive. We live 24/7 with our game face.

Back to this consulting engagement, the organization lacked in basic human relations type of skills though all levels – skills that are more natural in hospitality environments. By applying these hospitality traits to this organization, performance and employee morale improved

immensely. What I learned? I did not realize the power of the hospitality and service environment when introduced and applied to general businesses.

John Smith
Former General Manager,
Georgia World Congress Center
Atlanta, Georgia

I learned that sometimes southern hospitality works best outside the South. I've always thought that if you asked nicely and doted on the compliments, people were generally accommodating. That's not always the case in Walland, Tennessee. Sometimes the claws have to come out (nicely polished and with a smile, of course).

I learned that Walland, Tennessee is in a time zone all by itself. Because when they say, "We'll not be doing any hammering (on the construction that was promised to be finished before your group arrived) before 9 a.m.," 9 a.m. actually comes before 7 a.m. And when you bring up this time difference phenomenon (with a smile, of course) and you are assured it has been corrected, it's amazing how at midnight it resets itself and it happens again the next morning. Claws...

However, I also learned that although I grew up in the South eating all things fried, I had not lived until I had fried macaroni and cheese. The sinful combination of carbohydrates and fresh mountain air does things to a Southern belle. It makes you forget that things promised were not fulfilled. And they are trying as best they can, bless their hearts.

Stephanie Davis
Marketing Coordinator
HCC Life Insurance Company
Atlanta, Georgia

I learned that you can not fire someone from a volunteer organization. Then I learned if you read the By-laws carefully, you can find a way to remove the volunteer! Reading is fundamental.

Shelly
From an Anonymous Organization
With a vacancy on the Board of Directors
Haddonfield, New Jersey

In January, we suffered the loss of an unborn child. Then in April, my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Three surgeries throughout the summer followed. At the same time, her father was diagnosed with lung cancer. His lung was removed and my wife began chemotherapy. She's lost all of her body hair, as most chemo patients do. Bald, weakened and scared she begins radiation treatment next week. As if that wasn't enough, we have a mentally and physically retarded child who is entering puberty. His behaviors have become extreme to the point we are not able to provide for him. Given the extremely limited resources available for children of this nature in Michigan and the financial challenges we face from loss of my wife's income, we've had to make the difficult decision to place him in a foster care home. Ending our parental rights and placing him with the state is the only external option available.

Throughout the year of medical appointments, wrecked emotions and life-changing decisions that will permanently scar our family, we've found strength in unexpected places, the laughter of our two normal children, the hugs of family and the kindness of neighbors. Those aspirations we previously felt were so important are now not even considerations as we live each day with a focus on living each moment to the fullest.

What I've learned throughout this year is that friends and family are the source of happiness and strength that power life. Houses, cars, clothes, promotions, none are important. They are necessary, but not important. Work and toil will always be there, family may not. Focus your time, attention and love on those you care about - for they are truly precious and from their love comes strength.

Todd Liedeke
Account Manager
Morley Incentives
Saginaw, Michigan

My story is taken from my retirement at MGR Food Services. The key thing I learned is a quote from one of my favorite sci-fi authors Mercedes Lackey in the Owl Trilogy books she wrote with her husband, Larry Dixon. The salient story follows:

Many of you were aware of my Plan A – build the dream house, move to St. George Island, start a business with my girlfriend Peggy and generally contemplate my navel. The house was designed, I advised MGR I was leaving, and waited for a proposal from the builder. Holy hurricane, Batman! The bid came in over \$300 a square foot to build. It doesn't take too many hits with a 2x4 to get my attention and figure out this wasn't in my best interest.

So now I have moved onto Plan B. I'm still going to contemplate my navel for a short while, but here in Atlanta. I'm sprucing up the existing beach house, Peggy and I did start our company on St. George, and we'll see where it goes. I read a great line in a book – 'If you can't have what you want, change your mind until you want what you have.'

Jane Nipps
Atlanta, Georgia
My former boss of MGR Food Services
At the Georgia World Congress Center
*Who I should share with everyone came up with the name of my company Rx for Catering.

Can a professional woman really have it all? A great marriage, children, and a great career? I embarked on this journey in '06 to find an answer without even realizing what was happening. For once in my life, nothing was planned.

I got engaged last year on Christmas Day. I had given up on love after two failed marriages and a string of really bad relationships. I am a very independent woman, as are most in my field, and I decided to put my career above everything else until I met JJ. For once, someone understood all of the out of town trips to tradeshow for weeks on end and the wildly insane work schedules of all of us who plan events, meetings, etc.

Little did I know that the engagement would begin a whirlwind of activity in my life for 2006! Just when I thought all I really needed to do this year was plan a fabulous wedding, I found out in March that I am pregnant. I was shocked but also overjoyed as I am 33 years old and this would be my first child. JJ and I married soon after with a fabulous June wedding at our friend's house.

It is mid-November now and I am working from home waiting for my daughter Ashley Ella to be born. As I reflect on 2006 I will always remember that this was the year for ME, finally. I have a great job, a wonderful husband, a beautiful new house, and a small miracle on the way.

The true test of whether or not a professional woman really can have it all will be how I handle the sleepless nights and long trips away from home after the baby is born, but I will leave that story for next year.

Susan Mays ~ who gave birth to her daughter Dec. 6 ~ Congratulations Susan
Director, Public Relations
Turbomeca USA
Dallas, Texas

At 48 years old I thought I would be pretty settled in my learning process ... but low and behold in 2006 I learned so much on a personal, spiritual and business level ... I learned to trust in love ... and became married after 16 years of being "single" ... to trust someone with so intimately with my heart and soul is truly freeing. I learned even more as the months ticked by and my mother's body began to fail her ... mortality came into play ... and the biggest lesson of all... is the unconditional love that dwells within all of us ... all she can say is she not once but three times... "I love, love, love you" ... and in her end stages of life ... she can still have a crush (on my husband)... and Betty Grable legs!

On a spiritual level ... I began to learn more on Buddhism and the divine within all of us ... the precious balance of daily practice and living the course ... taking the deep look inside to "rearrange" if you will.. being flexible with the ebbs and flows of what I really want to invest my time in ...

In January I opened my skincare studio that sneaky little voice of fear that I would not be able to sustain a decent income ... my husband told me that before the year is over I would be overwhelmed with business ... so here I sit writing this over a stack of new office space opportunities

“Goodness is infectious” ... and I have learned that to be truth!

Connie Johnson
Atlanta, Georgia

What I learned in 2006 is humidity – is a good thing. Okay, okay...I know all the Californians will balk at such a horrific statement, but after spending what seems like half my life in Las Vegas recently, I decided that a bead of sweat on the forehead far surpasses wearing Chapstick all over my face, sporting skin that looks like a crocodile, and a bleeding lip while I try to look professional at my events. And Carmex is, indeed, the only thing that works.

Melody Urso
Independent Contractor
Tampa, Florida

Ok if you are still sticking with me..here are a couple of things I have learned in 2006.

My sister Lois is actually a very witty writer herself. She is a generous person ~ always doing volunteer work and enjoying helping others. One of her volunteer gigs is actually working with puppies that are going through puppy training to become a seeing eye dog. She takes the dogs while the people that actually train the puppies in the first stages go on vacation. Her first dog was a black lab named Gidget that actually FLUNKED out of seeing eyedog school during the last part of training but was accepted into the ATF program. Here is what my sister wrote about her last visit with “G.”

Before the Beltons drove to VA, they stopped at 12 Mullingar Court so I could say goodbye to Gidget. You will be pleased to know that I waited until after they left before I had my meltdown.

Anyway, Daphne called me last night—G passed her test to be a bomb sniffer. Said test consisted of the trainer tossing dog treats underneath one of those jumbo SUV and seeing if G would dive in after the food (like who wouldn't?). Part two: the trainer had dog biscuits in his hand, he wanted to see if Gidget would follow his hand as he waved it back and forth in front of her face. Needless to say my girl passed both parts with flying colors. Like we both don't know our treats!

There are 20 labs (18 black, 2 chocolate) in this kennel (she has her own room). G is going to train with the dogs going to customs. The Beltons got a tour of the facility, which is spotless. Gidget's first two weeks arespent adjusting to life in the kennel and playing, then she gets down to business. 6 weeks of training, 10 weeks of going out with a handler. Then it's graduation. The best part of this is that whoever G gets paired with...she is literally by his side all the time. The dog doesn't sleep outside, or even in the basement. The dog sleeps in the bedroom, but not necessarily on the bed (although she doesn't take up much room).

Daphne said everyone was very nice and loving, and we could visit any time we wanted. ATF has dogs in 18 countries, but hopefully G will be state-side.

My sister, Lois Gould
Baltimore, Maryland

The last is that I have learned that people will always continue to surprise me. Good or bad, people are unpredictable. Lucky for me this is one of the most beautiful notes I ever received in my life. When I sent my request out to diary readers, I immediately got a response from Debra Bunkley who heads the worldwide event team at Coca-Cola. What was so surprising about this is that IT IS HARD to get hold of Debra on a day-to-day basis. Ok, did I say hard? I meant IMPOSSIBLE. This is such a perfect note to springboard off as we are opening the door into 2007. Now folks this could be about any two people, but the last couple lines of her note are so true in today's world that we tend to forget. My wish for everyone is that that we hold Debra's sage advice close to our hearts in 2007. Take it away, Debra...

Here's what I've learned.

Old friends aren't always the best friends. It's sometimes the new friends that immediately click and make the connection, and you know they have your back and you have theirs. I've had such an experience this year with my friend Claire Gould. While I haven't known her for many years, she and I instantly clicked—when you connect a strong Black woman and a smart Jewish woman you get a bond that crosses color lines, class barriers, and stereotypes. We see each other for what we truly are - genuine, honest, fun-loving people who care about people and want to see each other succeed. Because I know Claire is a good soul, I will share her with my team and others.

She makes me laugh when someone has pissed me off or I make her laugh when I know she's ready to kick the dog. If there were more examples of ebony/ivory bonds like this, Bush could retire. We've got the secret to breaking down the racial divide - just enjoy life and accept people for what they are, not what you want them to be.

That's what I've learned. Thanks my friend.

Debra Bunkley, CMP
Manager - Global Event Planning and Production
The Coca-Cola Company
Atlanta, Georgia

I would like to thank the folks who took the time to share their stories and for everyone else for reading them. Please do take a minute to look at my pictures of the quarter. Anyone needing my services I do have open dates in May, July and August.

With appreciation,

Claire R. Gould
Owner
Rx for Catering, LLC
rxforcatering.com