

Practicing Second Fiddle Skills

In a recent sermon by Pastor Amy, she quoted a pronouncement from Paul, from a modern version of the Bible, regarding how we should act if we wished to be a good person. Besides the expected admonitions to treat others with respect, being charitable and loving our fellow persons, one challenge caught my eye...**practice playing Second Fiddle.**

I guess the **Second Fiddle** part caught my eye because of my recent experiences as a transporter at the local hospital. Being fortunate to have had a number of positions with leadership responsibilities, I have experienced **First Fiddle** treatment by others. “Please sit here.” “Would you like a cup of coffee?” “Would you like to make a few remarks?” These were all comments I was used to hearing. If one were not careful, it would be easy to commence thinking that you were very important and deserving of special treatment. In fact, I saw many folks in leadership positions through the years that came to expect “free tickets, better parking places, better seats... and deference from others.” I noticed increased deference when I received new positions (Full Professor, Captain in the Navy or a Directorship at a Medical School) and also noticed that the deference was greatly reduced once I no longer held those positions. You see it wasn’t about me but rather the position I held. People in **First Fiddle** positions must be careful not to take themselves too seriously, not to equate deference with the kind of person they really are. The Golden Rule might be the proper thought to keep in mind.

But back to being a volunteer at a hospital, transporting patients from one location to another in a wheelchair...most being discharged and happy to be going home...almost everyone quite open to telling the transporter their story. It becomes a relationship developed within a fifteen minute window, based on two people with a common interest, one pushing another who can’t wait to get home. The patient has no idea who the transporter is, and yet, is quite willing to share some deep health

secrets that the transporter didn't request...a need to share an important fact about their very personal lives...a willingness to be known to a stranger...another human being just like them...not an important person who requires deference or special treatment. A fellow person riding around the sun with them. It is a relationship based on a common goal (getting [you] the hell out of here!) and there is no need to put on airs.

When I volunteered to be a transporter, I did so because my wife wanted to help at the hospital where she had spent much of her nursing career and I selected a role which would provided me with the most exercise (8000/9000 steps per four hour shift). I hadn't realized that along with the exercise I would be getting **Second Fiddle** experience...something much more important. The patient is the star...the transporter is a person helping the patient (another person) meet one of his/her goals.

Transporters are nearly always appreciated by patients but are nearly invisible to many of the medical staff...thus giving more impact to the **Second Fiddle** experience. Most positions in this life aren't **First Fiddle** positions but are important in accomplishing those things that need to be done. "Nobody knows my name" can be a humbling and important part of self understanding and self esteem. I believe we all can become better people if we can improve our **Second Fiddle** skills.

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