



Pressure Makes the Diamond

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

A few months ago, I was watching a story called "The Milan Miracle" on ESPN. Many of you may be familiar with this tale. It's the story, made famous in the movie *Hoosiers*, of a small town Indiana basketball team that won the state basketball title in 1954. While watching the show I was intrigued by the comments of one of the former players. The interviewer said, "Weren't you intimidated by the size of the school you were playing, Muncie Central?" The former player said, "Pressure makes the diamond". I thought that was a beautiful statement about life and decided to write about it this month.

So often in our lives we whine about how we are not getting the breaks. We bemoaned Murphy's Law and consistently tell ourselves we would be able to achieve our dreams if only.... I know, I have done my fair share of complaining, however, what I have come to realize is that all of us are up against what feel like impossible odds. Life can be incredibly challenging. On the other hand, if we face this struggle with humility, focus and courage, we can overcome the most daunting tasks; in a sense we become diamonds.

M. Scott Peck opens his wonderful book, *The Road Less Traveled*, like this:

"Life is difficult.

This is a great truth, one of the great truths. It is a great truth because once we understand it we can transcend it."

So, you might ask, how do we transcend it? How do we make pressure work for us? In my experience it's all about getting in touch with our most deeply held beliefs and passions. Once we know exactly what it is we are after, it is simply a matter of time before pressure makes the diamond.

I read a perfect example of this recently in Mother Teresa's biography by Christian Feldman. In it the author recounts how Mother Teresa overcame incredible odds to start her Missionaries of Charity. In the beginning she set up a refuge where the poorest of poor in Calcutta could come to die. Since only two percent of the population in Calcutta was Catholic the sisters were not trusted initially. Local residents felt that the sisters had set up the shelter as a ruse to recruit Catholics. Consequently, every day Hindu teenagers would gather outside the shelter and yell obscenities and throw rocks at the shelter. Obviously, this made it very difficult for the sisters to do their job. Did Mother Teresa complain? Did she bemoan the unbelievable challenges she was facing? No. Unbelievable, she marched out and confronted the angry mob of adolescents. All five feet and one hundred pounds of her exclaimed, "If you want to kill me go ahead! If not, get out of our way so we can do our job!" The boys were awestruck. They put down their rocks and asked Mother Teresa how they could help her. With this same courage, Mother Teresa won over, not only the neighborhood, but the whole world. Because of her courage and leadership there are now 4600 missionaries of charity helping the poor all over the world. Thank goodness she did not turn away in the face of her challenges. I hope we all can take a lesson about how to handle pressure from this amazing woman.