

MO-TI-VA-TED ! ! ! ! !

My family (sans dog) tells me I missed my calling: I should've been a motivational preacher, err, speaker. My editor tells me I missed my column last week. With this week's column coming up, she tried motivating with psychology. How was she so successful?

First, she did me the favor of running a photo I took of some friends, family and dogs standing in the mud in a park.... And my copy explaining that the park and its supporters were on the verge of a new era, on replete with new grass, new trees, and no weeds.



Second, under my copy, my intrepid editor added this:

This special report on Hunakai Park by Island Homes real estate analyst Ricky Cassiday is published in lieu of his regular Commentary column, which he promises to submit for next Sunday's real estate section.

Subtle? No. Motivational? Obviously, for it worked.

I had another motivational moment the other day, thanks to a client, who also a long-time friend of my father. We'd been talking about the housing market over coffee at Wisteria, when, out of the blue, he said, "Aren't you glad you're an entrepreneur..."

It was not a question, but a statement, and it knocked me right off stride.

Those who know me professionally are quite used to hearing me talk like Walter Cronkite, the quintessential old-style TV anchor... slow, dispassionate, detailed, thoughtful. I think I got this from my stepfather, who talks the way a front-page article in the NY Times reads: in complete sentences, the first of which all-ways contains the 'what, when, who, how, why' facts. As a former journalist for the Cleveland Plain Dealer and TIME magazine, he's much better at being factual than I. Also, he's much less boring.

So this statement stopped me, BOOM. It made me think. I stopped being Walter Cronkite immediately, but I needed a couple seconds to figure out what he was saying.

Part of the need to figure was because he and I were completely different:

He's a guy who has his hands around two very large, very upscale, residential developments (and one who has to keep a strong grip, as the details of developing and building fly by faster and faster)... and I'm someone who has his hands around a very large data base of residential transactions (and one that keeps growing, by leaps and bounds).

The real difference is this: I'm a one-man show, and he has a couple dozens, who orchestrate many more dozens. Maybe part of the reason why I sound so Cronkite is I'm but one. More likely, it is because I'm trying to be objective. On the other hand, most of my clients are completely passionate about what they do: build something great for people to live in. So, they're emotional, I'm objective...

Yet all of us are entrepreneurs... all of us don't know if tomorrow will bring buyers to our doors (well, his doors, or my voicemail or email).

All of us are trying our best to give our buyers every reason to engage us.

And all of us only have ourselves to blame if nothing happens.

And the business we're in, residential real estate is pretty thoroughly entrepreneurial. There are big businesses, landowners and developers; there are smaller businesses, contractors and architects; and there are individuals, real estate agents and market consultants (smile). But the biggest entrepreneurial part of the business is the homeowners and homebuyers, who are making entrepreneurial decisions that have a direct impact on their financial security.

It is a good time to be making these decisions: the costs of homeownership are manageable, the prices are tending to rise, and the economy appears headed for further growth and prosperity. That's good news for the estimated 60% of us own housing, and hopeful for the other 40% that either rents or lives at home: housing not only serves to shelter us, but home ownership serves to increase our net worth. And a decision to own a home mindful of one's financial security puts the decision-maker squarely in the category of entrepreneur.

And, if I may echo an earlier statement: "Aren't you glad you're an entrepreneur..."