

After University and a Secretarial Certificate course, I set out to seek employment. It all started when I attended my first job interview.

“Hello”, I’m Pam. Is this your first interview?” enquired the pretty Managing Director’s Secretary.

Stuttering, I confirmed” Yes it is”.

Sitting in the reception area in the office that had brown cubicles with blue carpet flooring and the staff smartly dressed in office attire. The atmosphere of classiness pervaded the room and made me realize that this was a very significant job for which I had applied for. Work and time meant everything for all and as the saying goes:

‘Time and Tide waits for no man’,

This I could witness for myself by the manner in which the staff were working. The company goal, in big and golden letters was hanging laminated on a wall that was visible to all.

I was given an application form to be filled in and told to wait. Thin, tall and inexperienced I felt inadequate but did not give up hope. While waiting I noticed four other candidates had arrived and were given forms to be filled in as well. I was the last to be interviewed.

Waiting with anticipation, my eyes moving all over the office, smiling at staff that passed by. So many issues kept popping up in my head, what will they ask in the interview? Do my qualifications meet their requirement? Am I the least qualified applicant? What if I was the only person with no experience?

Oh so many qualms and queries transpired in my mind. To end all this stress I told myself accepts what is to happen and do your best. Soon it was my turn for the interview and at the end of it all I walked out of the office room quiet satisfied in the manner in which the interview was conducted. We were later told that the result would be sent to us post.

My perception was that time was going slow as my wait for an answer from the interview panel became the most vital time for the future of my life. This time spent enabled me to enhance my perception and vision of life. I began to search for the meaning of life. What is life I asked myself?

Life is like a bubble in a stream. It’s beautiful but it can burst the next minute. Life is also like a moon which is beautiful and ever pleasant. At this point of time there were two options for me: either I get the job or this failure will only lead me in further studying and upgrading myself. But then again as I learnt in school and college that experience enables one to master the art of living and this led me to think that further studies would definitely lead myself in acquiring more credentials.

But working on the other hand will also lend a helping hand to my experiences and thus the need for co-relating studied knowledge and experienced knowledge was necessarily required at this point of time.

To my surprise, I got a call from Pam asking me to appear for the final interview. I got the job!

Pam congratulated me and started authoritatively “your duties will be to assist me when there is no departmental work, as also to stand in for me during my absence from the office. “

My confidence left on hearing the latter part of my duties, but after a couple of minutes’ determination set in to give each assignment my best effort. Pam taught me the rudiments of office practice. Sometimes impatience showing at my slow pace of grasping, to which I would say:

“Have patience with me, this is my first job”.

Now came the test of friendship. This journey of life enables one to meet other people and thus friendship blooms. One not only learns from these experiences but also to hold on to life’s most precious gift known as friendship. For time will pass and life will forever keep changing but friends once attained can never be replaced through time. This fact I guess I had to explore for myself.

Habitually I would count numbers aloud and this followed me into the office. On several occasions I counted loudly while typing debit and credit notes.

One day while doing so, I was abruptly interrupted by:

“Can’t you type without disturbing others? You are not in school anymore.”

It was reprimand from Pam. I felt my face go hot and could not stop the solitary tear from rolling down my cheek.

Several days passed, but Pam did not speak to me. I felt uncomfortable. She went about her tasks as if I was invisible. Neither did I have the courage to speak up.

After a week she said:

“Sorry for being rude to you. I should be more understanding”.

“I’m sorry too. How inconsiderate of me”, I replied, and from that day, I was on my guard while typing numerals. There were caring times also, like the yummy cheese and sausage rolls which Pam shared with me.

Few friendships are sustainable, but this friendship grew. Pam married and decided to migrate to greener pastures. She resigned from her job. It was painful saying “Goodbye” to someone whom I looked upon as an elder sister and from whom I learnt a lot.

This friendship when compared to the friendships I had in school and college, was a friendship that was meant to be forever. School friends and university friends wherein one shared textbooks and spent time together learning for examinations. This true friend for through difficult times she was there despite the odds and laughed with me in good times as well.

I was given a six month period to hone my skills and take her place, which gave me a sense of accomplishment.

Thirty years on, I am also married. Pam and I have children and are about to be grandmothers. Our lives took different paths, but the chain of friendship continues via phone calls and exchange of cards and letters. From the first “Hello”, it went to “Goodbye”, but never “Farewell”.

Time has not withered this blooming friendship between two persons who once shared most of their waking hours in the office place, and who, besides multi-tasking and helping each other, were a solace to one another in sad times too.

A true friend never stands in your way unless you are going downhill.

As I’m reminded of the poem about friendship:

Friendship is the river that waters all fields,
It is the sunshine that brightens all day,
Friendship is the everlasting tree that yields-
Golden fruits and makes all children happy!

The gift of friendship is a treasure to possess,
It is a treasure that can’t be bought or sold,
And no one in the world can really assess,
The true value of friendship which is greater than gold!

When our hearts is weighed down with problems,
And when it starts drumming inside,
There is always a helping hand
To shove our problems aside!

What friendship means can’t be expressed in words,
It is something true and great,
The relation is stronger than cords,
And clean from all slander and hate!

Lovely roses bloom and fade away,
People live, and pass away,
Even the world might come to an end

But true friendship goes on forever!!
(Subini.2006).

Literary References

Subini.2006 “La Reflections”. Shirly Lawrence Foundations. Trivandrum.