

Who Packed Your Parachute?

It's out with the old and in with the new! Our 2010 calendar is consigned to the history books..... No more secrets or surprises. Each minute, each hour, each day has been accounted for. Yet we all should know that there is so much more to our lives than a few numbered pages on an out of date 2010 calendar! It contains a part of the story of my life....of your life. Its pages speak to all that touched us, influenced or had meaning for us. There were times of joy....of feeling very positive ...feeling good about what was going on in our lives and in our faith journey, either through our own actions or through our interaction with others. And equally, for some of us, there were times which were less positive. Times when we lost lifelong friends; Times perhaps of missed opportunities; Times of good deeds left undone.... But I am not going to dwell on the less positive areas of 2010 other than to say that I hope we learned from them.

Sometimes life-lessons come to us in the most unexpected way and the little story which follows is a true example of how one person can forever alter the attitude and actions of another. The story:-

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Pilot Officer Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a Vietnamese prison.

One day many years later, and back home in the USA, when officer Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Pilot Officer Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.



"I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!"

Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your parachute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about the man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot officer and he was just a AB seaman."

Plumb thought of the many hours the seaman had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know. It profoundly affected him and he began to talk about it in public, sharing the story about his below-deck 'saviour' whose parachute packing skills saved his life, always ending his motivational speaking with the question: 'Who packed your parachute?'

- Pastor Ian