

What's in your Box?

"If you will call your troubles experiences and remember that every experience develops some latent force within you, you will grow vigorous and happy, however adverse your circumstances may seem to be."

-James Russell Miller



BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

Boxes come in a million different shapes and sizes. Whether intended to hold tools, fishing gear, jewelry or clothes, there seems to be one for every conceivable need.

Did you know that each of us has our own unique box, too? It holds a collection of our personal life experiences. Whether positive or negative, the lessons we've learned from these experiences are paramount for building character, growing confidence and strengthening our backbone.

When I first entered the right of way profession, I spent several grueling weeks reading a very dry handbook. And while I actually nodded off a few times while reading sections on easements, legal descriptions and tariffs, this wearisome experience was character building and went directly into my box. To gain more perspective, I arranged a ride-along with a surveying crew. It wasn't long before I was crawling up hills, leaping over boulders and locating property pins. More stuff for my box. Then I attended a two-week course in right of way basics, where I learned how to communicate with owners and useful techniques to use in negotiations. My box was bulging with new information.

When I returned to the office, I found myself chained to my desk. Even though I felt ready to work with property owners, I just wasn't getting the opportunity. So I began listening to what was going on around me. It was clear how often the other agents in my office spoke with property owners. Listening closely to their conversations, I learned to establish a partnership with the owner. More stuff for my box.

The day finally came for my first conversation with an owner. My heart raced as I dialed his number. I was ready. But when the owner answered in a gruff voice, I could feel my throat tighten in fear. It was as if I were a small child, hearing old things from my childhood that were stored in my box. I was hearing what my teachers and other adults had said, "You can't handle this! You can't ever do anything right! You need to study harder." I tried to drive out those awful memories, but continued to stutter and stumble over my own words.

Then something amazing happened. Because there were so many encouraging things stored in my box, those experiences came to my rescue. I was able to recall my grandmother saying, "There isn't anything you can't do." I remembered other adults who encouraged me to go the extra mile, telling me, "Never ever give up, because you've got what it takes." Before long, my confidence was back. After my conversation with the property owner was over, I documented the file with "Owner grants easement."

Leaning back in my chair, a realization came over me. There was junk in my box. So I decided to trash those old thoughts that were no longer true, thoughts that tried to hold me back. And if negative thoughts ever crawled back into my box, which they do from time to time, I'd toss them out again until my box held only those experiences that challenged me and grew my character.

It's essential that you fill your box with what you know is truth - for you. What you know and believe in. And when you share these experiences with others, you may just discover that you've used those life lessons to create a better, richer life, and one with more purpose.

What's in your box? Make sure it's filled with the right stuff. There will likely be a time when someone needs something you have stored away in your box. Be generous. Share your stuff.



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