



Stumble Forward

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I recently watched a program about Samuel Clemens, the author who is perhaps better known as Mark Twain. Most people have read two of his most popular books in which he created the fictional characters of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Clemens grew up in Missouri and spent time on the Mississippi River surrounded by an environment that allowed slavery. He always wrote what he knew and these experiences were therefore prevalent in his books.

Clemens worked as a typesetter and as a riverboat pilot in his youth. He later became a journalist who used his sense of humour to write about situations where he didn't do well such as when he failed in the mining industry. He educated himself in libraries in the evenings because he felt that they provided more information than could be found in schools. He also educated himself through extensive world travel and that also provided content for his writings.

In 1870 Clemens married Olivia Langdon and they had four children. Over the years, he made a great deal of money as a writer and lecturer, however, he also made several bad investments associated with inventions and his publishing business. He wanted to be at home as much as possible but after filing for bankruptcy he went on a year-long lecture tour to pay his debts even though he wasn't legally required to do so. He was ill throughout much of the trip but fulfilled his commitments. During the financial stress, he also wrote as much as he could in order to earn money to support his family.

In 1896 his daughter died and Clemens went into depression. This worsened with the death of his wife, other family members and a close friend.

Oxford University awarded Clemens with an honorary doctorate degree in 1907. Several schools, a bridge, buildings, a stamp, an asteroid and awards have been named after his pen name of Mark Twain. Most people, however, will remember him best the author who left us with so many wonderful written works.

It was ironic that when Clemens died in 1910 at the age of 74 years his estate was worth almost twelve million dollars in today's money.

Clemens did what he had to do in order to survive financially. He suffered from depression and had several losses. Because he expressed his strong opinions through his writings, there were people who he upset over the years. But Clemens continued to do what he had to do despite the challenges.

What struggles are you facing? Are you having financial problems? Have you experienced painful losses?

Each of us can be inspired by Samuel Clemens, a man who put one foot in front of the other and did what needed to be done with consistency, humour and expertise despite the problems he faced.

He didn't know what legacy that he would leave and neither do you. So be encouraged