

Sand Castle Freedom

by Randall Munson, CSP

While building sand castles on the beach with my granddaughter, Emily, I discovered something. Of course, it was pure joy to play happily with Emily while basking in sunshine and our mutual love. The joy was not newly discovered, but strongly reinforced. What I discovered is the freedom that comes while building something that you know will be temporary.



Our sand castle

I knew that the sand castle we were building would be washed away with the next high tide. We were free to try whatever we wanted to without regard to long-term consequences.

The sand castle was not symmetric. Some parts fell over so we brushed them away and replaced them with something new. The finished castle was irregular, unconventional and strangely beautiful. We freely created something we never would have been willing to try if we thought the final product would be permanent. We would have been more careful and less creative.

I am reminded of walking through Chris-Town Mall in Phoenix, Arizona, where professional sand castle artists were creating huge sand sculptures. Because they were working with sand instead of stone, they were freely trying ideas. If they didn't like the way something looked, they would remove it, pack in some wet sand, and carve something new.

What caught my attention was the subject of the sculpture they were working on. It was called One Ring Circus and featured some of the world's best loved circus clowns. Because I knew some of the clowns in the sculpture, I chatted with the artists about them. They surprised me when they asked if I would give them permission to include me, as Circles the Clown, in the sculpture. I was honored to be included with such great clowns as Emit Kelley, Lou Jacobs, Felix Adler, and Otto Grabbling.

You can see my clown image peering out of the clown car between the legs of a stilt-walking clown. The sand sculpture was on display inside the mall for a number of years but, like my sand castle on the beach, it eventually crumbled and was swept away.



Picture postcard of the final massive sand sculpture fashioned out of 20 tons of sand

Since discovering how liberating it was to build with sand, I have endeavored to exercise the same freedom when creating things that I tend to think of as more permanent. I've come to realize that nothing lasts forever and attempts at perfection are paralyzing. One of the things I appreciate about writing magazine articles is that articles have a shorter life than my books. I feel more open to write spontaneously.

As you work diligently on things that seem to be permanent, try imagining that they are just temporary. Realize that if some things don't work quite right or you don't like them, it will be all right. Life will go on. They will be washed away and replaced. Feel free to try some creative innovations. The results will be worth it.

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