**Searching for happiness in the Northwoods**

Well, we have finally settled down somewhat after moving up here a year ago. It is most amazing that my wife and I are happier now than we ever have been.

Yes, we miss our friends in Milwaukee, and we miss all the restaurants with different concepts that we could frequently visit. Now, living in a smaller home, we are much happier than we ever have been. How can that be?

So, I started my journey in searching for happiness. And, surprisingly, none involves being rich, powerful or famous. And that hits me totally off guard, as growing up, I was molded to think that I have to work hard in order to make lots of money, have a career that can make me successful with a respectable status in the community and to live in a big mansion with a fancy car parked in the garage, just because.

Just because of what? Till this day, I still don’t know.

So, I started looking up various definitions of happiness, and this is what I found:

**Happiness**

* The quality of state of being happy
* Good fortune, pleasure, contentment, joy
* Exhilaration, bliss, contentedness, delight, enjoyment, satisfaction
* Pleasant and contented mental state
* Peace of mind
* Comes from warmheartedness
* Satisfaction with oneself
* By helping others
* More inner strength
* Fulfillment of one’s purpose
* Sense of love
* Eliminate all ill feelings
* Being selfless
* Being positive
* Trusted friendships
* Families
* Companions

And, amazingly, fame and fortune were not even slightly mentioned. How strange indeed. Then I remembered an email a good friend sent me a while back. It was about a rich father who sent his son to live with a poor family for a while just to learn what it is like being poor. Upon his return, when the wealthy father asked how the trip was, this was his reply:

“We have one dog, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our lawn, and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our yard and they have stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on, and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us. They have friends to protect them.”

And then the boy added, “Thanks Dad, for showing me just how poor we are.”

It is all based on one’s perspective. Our happiness should be based on what we have and enjoying it, rather than worrying about what we do not have and what we have to do to achieve it.  
And here is another story, from Arthur Ashe, the legendary Wimbledon player who was dying of AIDS, which he got from infected blood he received during heart surgery in 1983. He received letters from his fans, one of which conveyed, “Why did God have to select you for such a bad disease?”

Arthur Ashe replied, “The world over - 50 million children start playing tennis, 5 million learn to play tennis, 500,000 learn professional tennis, 50,000 come to the circuit, 5,000 reach the Grand Slam, 50 reach Wimbledon, four reach the semifinals, two reach the finals. And when I was holding the winning cup in my hand, I never asked God, ‘Why me?’ So now that I’m in pain, how can I ask God, ‘Why me?’”

And I will end this week’s column with the "final words" from Steve Jobs, the creator of Apple Computer, who passed away not too long ago. These words have been shown to not really be from Mr. Jobs as he was dying, but whoever wrote them, they are food for thought:

“As the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, I used to rebuke the business sector, invincible in the eyes of others. My life, of course, is a model of success. Now, in my hospital bed, I frequently think about my own life. I find that once I had a huge amount of pride in community fame and fortune but, in the face of impending death, all of this has become dull and meaningless.

“I repeatedly think about that late at night. What I want most now is something that my life’s money and fame can never give me. What is it that has real value? In the dark, I look at those measuring machines, instruments with quiet green lights and buzzing sounds, and seem to feel death’s warm breath move closer to me.

“Now, I understand that, as long as there is enough wealth in a man’s life, the pursuit of other things, unrelated to wealth, should be the more important things, perhaps feeling, maybe it is art, maybe it is just a childhood dream. Endless pursuit of wealth will only make people greedy and boring.

“God made us and gave us a rich sense of love in our hearts, rather than the sense of unreal wealth of money and fame. I won all the wealth I cannot take with me, and can take only memories of love and affection, which is the true wealth in life.”

So, my dear friends, I have found my happiness. I hope you will find yours too.

*Peter Kwong’s book, “Wok & Roll” is available at phkwong.com*