

THE RACE TO HAPPINESS

by

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PREFACE

Recently, I attended a luncheon hosted by the Cupertino Historical Society. The event was in honor of the the latest exhibit entitled; FIELD OF DREAMS, Women of Cupertino 1855-1925. I sat in rapture while three native born individuals reminisced about their lives and the lives of their families here in the Silicon Valley.

One story in particular captured my heart. Mathilda Mariani Sousa told about her parents and the happiness that their lives held. It was a story of love triumphing over life, and the romantic in me sighed in delight with the story's end. While riding home I thought about my own life and wondered why I was not happy the way Mr. and Mrs. Mariani had been. In comparison, my life is much easier than theirs. So, why were they happy while I was not? What afforded them happiness while their lives were splattered with disappointments? Could I too experience that kind of happiness?

In the following essay, I came to some incredible revelations about the ability to become happy. In so doing, I have found great happiness. I would like to thank in earnest Mathilda Mariani Sousa for sharing the story of her parents and for helping me to reach for the stars.

Sheila Clark

THESIS: Happiness is a by-product of actively pursuing your dream.

Outline

I Introduction We all want to live happy lives.

A. We all want to live happy lives.

1. Thomas Jefferson gives us an insight to happiness.
2. Webster helps to clarify what happiness means.

B. We can compare life with being in a race.

1. Dreams are the finish lines we are straining after in our race.
 - a. You have to find out what your dream is.
 - b. Without a dream you will wander through life aimlessly.
2. Fulfilling your goals gives your soul self worth.

II The Story of Paul and Victoria Mariani is one of reaching destiny.

III There is three things to keep in mind in pursuing happiness.

A. First, you must reach inside your heart and find your dream.

1. Paul and Victoria dreamed of being together.
2. My dream is to be a writer.

B. Next, you must plan a course to reach your destination.

1. Paul planned the steps needed to reach his destiny.
2. Learning what my first step is was my first step

C. Do not submit to discouragement when obstacles cause you to reroute.

IV Conclusion, Happiness comes when you are actively pursuing your dream.

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Fairy tales and romance novels always come to an end with "happily-ever-after." Realistically, we know that endings are not always happy. Yet, these stories of make-believe are our obsession. Why is it we are never able to resist reading just one more? And, why can't each and every one of us have a happily-ever-after ending come into our

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own lives just like in the stories?

It is not that we cannot have happiness. We can. But happiness is often mistaken as a gift when it should be considered an achievement. It requires effort and energy to obtain. Passively waiting for bubbly feelings to overcome you will only leave you feeling washed out. The happiness fairy is not going to pop-out of the book you are mooning over, and clicking your ruby slippers three times in rapid succession will not work either. Happiness will not come simply by wishing for it.

Over two hundred years ago a remarkable person by the name of Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence for a young and idealistic country named America. In this manifesto he declared, among other things, that each person has the unalienable right to pursue happiness. If you examine these words carefully, you may notice a striking difference in what he said and what most of us think he said. Jefferson did not claim that each person has the right to be happy. Nor, did he say that each person will be happy. He said the we all have the right to pursue happiness.

According to the Webster Dictionary the verb to pursue means "to follow in an effort to overtake or capture; chase. To strive to gain or accomplish." Webster defines happiness as a noun derived from the adjective to be happy. Being happy is "characterized by good fortune; prosperous. Having or demonstrating pleasure or satisfaction; gratified." Then, Paraphrasing what Jefferson said was, that we have the right to strive toward something that brings us satisfaction. We have the right to dream and to take steps of our choosing

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to fulfill that dream. What the founding fathers of this great country believed was that to obtain happiness each person must chase after it. Focus your attention on the verb to pursue. So, happiness is a by-product that comes when you are actively pursuing . . . what?

I want you to consider, for the purpose of this paper, life as a race. There are many people who are running the race, but do not have any destination in mind. Those people are running around a course countless times never seeming to complete it. When a deeply grooved rut or obstacle blocks their path they may simply change directions and run in an entirely different direction. In a word, they are aimless. Life has no meaning or purpose for them. There are thousands of people in the city of Cupertino who site feelings of emptiness as the reason for their depression. In a time of great health and wealth, millions of people are admitting to being miserable. It seems as if, without a dream, life is empty. Trying to convince people that their lives are not empty without a dream is a waste of time. For a person to not feel empty they must feel filled. Self worth comes a sense of self fulfillment. It comes from within yourself.

We alone can answer the question of our self worth. Self-fulfillment comes as we reach our potential by living out our destiny. Destiny is the dream in a heart. The state of happiness comes as a by-product when you are actively pursuing your dream. Keep this in mind and you will understand the happiness woven throughout the following story about a man, his beloved and their destiny of being together.

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Once upon a time, in a country far across an immense crystal sea, there lived an enchanting young man. He was born to the Mariani family, his parents christening him Paul. Paul was deeply in love with a beautiful girl from the Svilich family. She was christened Victoria. Victoria also loved Paul. It seemed as if they had always been in love. Even as small children their devotion to each other could easily be discerned. The love they shared was so sweet and pure that no one doubted its strength.

Paul's family owned and operated a vineyard and winery. Paul began training very early learning how to run the family business. Someday it would be his; his and Victoria's. Life was good, and Paul was very happy. He knew what he was going to do with his life, he was learning how to do it, and he had someone very special to do it with him.

As Paul and Victoria matured, so did their love. Their happiness was not undermined by their serious commitment to each other. Instead happiness grew. Soon, the entire community began planning in earnest for the joining of these two families. It is easy to imagine a lovely and vibrant Victoria eagerly learning to sew and cook. Feverishly working to stock her hope chest, she would daydream of the time when she would be responsible for the care of the home and family that they, together, would share. She would be the caregiver and Paul would be the provider. To accomplish this they knew they both had even more to learn. So, they began strive harder to complete the necessary goals.

Paul set out to learned all about the family crops; when to and how to plant, prune and harvest. He needed to understand the principles of irrigation, the names and uses of the

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various tools, and how to fight off disease and pests. The management of the workers both for vineyard maintenance and the influx needed for harvest gradually added to his long list of responsibilities. Above all, he understood the importance of learning how to read and write in order to maintain and balance the family books. Victoria also worked hard on her education. Paul realized, that as his helpmate, Victoria needed to understand and help run the family business.

Years flew by for the two young lovers. Suddenly, the inconceivable happened. In 1900, the Svilich family, including Victoria, immigrated from Komiza, Yugoslavia to Cupertino, California in the United States of America. The reason is unknown. We only know that the sweethearts were torn apart. Their hearts were ripped and their plans crushed. But, Paul refused to let their dream also be destroyed. Risking family rejection and ignoring well-meaning advice, he gave up his inheritance for the love he knew was his destiny. In 1902, a seventeen year old Paul sailed to America with only forty dollars in his pocket and a dream in his soul.

He put to good use the extra time afforded him during the long voyage by setting up a new strategy. Listing out his priorities he knew the next step he needed was to earn enough money to travel from New York to California. He had to be close to Victoria. Only with her did he feel his had meaning. He needed to let her and her family know that they could still be together. After that, he had to develop a business so that one day he could support her as his wife. He knew California was the land of opportunity. With that ace in

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his pocket, and the training and education he worked so hard for earlier, he should not have much trouble in his role as provider. Then, they could live out their life together as man and wife and never worry about being ripped apart again.

With these objectives in mind, he got a job working at a coconut factory in New York City, earning about \$1.50 a day. Hoarding every penny, it was not long before he was able to purchase a ticket to San Francisco. It may have seemed long to Paul though, which would explain his subsequent aversion to coconut. Once in San Francisco he got busy building up his finances again. He could never ask for Victoria's hand if he could not provide for her. He could never have his dream without earning it. He landed a job as a cooper with the help of Dr. Kucich, a friend of the Svilich family. He had grander schemes than working as a cooper the rest of his life. Still, it was a necessary step granting him the finances and time to build up a business.

His first day off work was forever in coming. When it did arrive, he was off to Cupertino to see Victoria. By train or by bike or even hitch-hiking, he made the journey to see his beloved on every occasion possible. What a beautiful reunion that first memorial trip must have been. The romantic in each and every one of us sighs in happiness as the two young lovers meet again. Years of loneliness and broken hopes wash away with tears of joy and love's sweet embrace. What a celebration of joy! Their dream of being together was still alive.

During his visits, time would speed quickly by. Soon, too soon, it was time for Paul to

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return to his job as a cooper. With each happy trip to Cupertino, the returning trip to San Francisco was even more anguishing than the one before it. He decided it was time to double up his efforts for the culmination of their dream. Using his new experience as a cooper, he started up a business building barrels used for the fishing industry in Alaska. He also invested some of his income in land speculation. More specifically, he purchased a lot of land located in the San Francisco bay. The scheme was to eventually reclaim that part of the bay by bringing in fill. With the completion of the project the purchased lots would be worth a hundredfold. The whole venture was risky at best. How long would the investors have to wait? Was it a legal investment? Whom could they contract to do the work? What if the area was un-reclaimable? The purchased lots might prove to be worthless. Paul decided it was worth the risk.

Then, tragedy struck again. It seemed Mother Nature was putting her seal of disapproval against tampering with what she ruled. The earthquake of 1906 that rocked the whole bay area all but leveled San Francisco. Paul considered himself one of the lucky ones. He sent a small note to Victoria, via the Red Cross, telling her he was fine. He was homeless and jobless, but he was alive and so was their dream.

Traveling across the bay, Paul found another job this time as a salmon fisherman in Oakland and later again as a cooper this time in St. Helena. In 1907, not being able to bare separation any longer, Paul and Victoria wed. Following up on a lead for a more profitable financial venture, they moved to the Napa Valley. He had not made his fortune, nor had he been able to establish a profitable business as he would have liked. He

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simply decided that if they were together they could do anything. The Svilich Family's immigration and then the massive earthquake proved life was too risky to not grab tightly and hang on to what was really important. Whatever gifts he wanted to lie at Victoria's feet were not as important as being there himself.

For two years they shared a life as man and wife. Life was tenderly affectionate for them. But soon the fickleness of fate turned its hand against them once more. Paul had become deathly ill. He was bed-ridden. The doctors surmised he had developed an allergy to the fumes of heated oak prevalent in the area where they lived. Perhaps this was the most difficult time of Paul's life. Was this all the life he could expect to have with his precious Victoria? Did they work so hard to overcome so many difficult hurdles for just a few short months of happiness. No, it could not be. He would not give up so easily. He listed his options; he could stay in the Napa Valley and wait his death or they could return to Yugoslavia. There, his family would provide for Victoria and their children after his death. Yet, he was reluctant to leave this prosperous new land. Victoria's father was able to provide them with one more option. He opened his home to them in Cupertino. Paul quickly took him up on his offer.

With the clean air of Cupertino, an Italian faith healer, and the help of Victoria's family, Paul soon regained his strength. It was not long before they were both racing towards more goals, together, hand in hand as in their dream. He and Victoria finished out their lives in Cupertino. Though they never became rich, they successfully utilized the education

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and training they worked so hard to gain earlier in their lives. They created a fruit-drying empire that is said to dominate the market still. More than anything though they were happy.

Mathilda Mariani Sousa was one of four children born to Paul and Victoria. She has wonderful memories of her parents. Life continued to have its good and bad seasons, but together they laughed through them all. When Victoria finally past away, they all grieved deeply. None more than Paul was. It was not long afterwards, that the man who survived division, destruction and devastation, lost the will to live. He joined his mate in a place beyond the grave. I believe in my heart they are living there happily-ever-after.

We have the opportunity to learn something valuable and beautiful from this wonderful story. Fairy-tales and romance novels do not have to be the only things that have happily-ever-after endings. Let's analyze what we can learn through this true life love story.

Paul and Victoria had a dream. They wanted a life together. They had this dream since they were children. To you or me this dream may seem a bit dull. It does not matter what our thoughts are. It was their dream. Do you have a dream? It does not have to be earthshaking. It's the secret longing deep inside of you. What have you always wanted to be? to do? to have? My secret longing, as a little girl, has always been to become a world famous author. I wanted to be able to write children's book classics that to hand down from generation to generation. I loved to write.

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I thought it was only a whimsy. As I grew, I brushed my dream aside and set goals for a more practical future. I went to college and earned a degree in education. If I could not write for children perhaps I could find contentment in working with them. At least I can earn a living as a teacher (well, almost). I went through the motions to do what I needed in order to live. Years passed by. During this time I fell deeply in love, married, and had two children of my own. But, I never felt fulfilled. I loved and I am loved, so why was I so sad? With my husband's help I remembered my dream of one day becoming a writer. We decided it was time to pursue my dream, together. That was all it took.

Knowing your heart's destiny is the first step in pursuing happiness. Paul and Victoria's were to have a life together. Mine is to become a writer. Remember earlier I compared life to a race. Defining your heart's destiny is like giving the race a finish line. To complete your race, and break through the ribbon at the finish line in triumph, requires conditioning through planning. Not just a here-a-little, there-a-little, helter-skelter, tit or tats and if the wind blows in the right direction you can hopefully make it, planning. Rather, a planning that is carefully laid out and marked with check points and mini goals. The laying out of the course is the second step in pursuing happiness.

Paul started his conditioning through planning, very early in life. Education, and hands on experience could be two of his most prevalent and demanding check points. Within those goals were series of mini goals; learning to read, write, add, and subtract, plant, harvest, etc. Having mini goals not only marked his point on the course but encouraged

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him in the distance he had been able to cover thus far. His pre-teen days began long before the sun appeared on the horizon. Often, he did not stop until after the warming rays were completely gone from the earth and it was once again cool to the touch.

Setting goals or check points to mark the course sounded so simple. Paul and Victoria's story made it look easy. Unfortunately, I have learned how difficult it can be. The first step, to gain a basic education, I had already completed. I earned a degree in education. So, now what must I do? What was the next step in becoming a writer? How can I reroute my course? Whom should I ask? Where do I look for answers? Swallowing my pride, I decided to go back to school. First, I found a part-time job to earn money to pay for the courses I needed. Then, I was able to enroll. Choosing courses that sounded the most productive, I set a schedule for learning. I am a mother, homemaker, spouse, and substitute teacher so, juggling the courses became another goal. Some days are really crazy. Even in doing all this, and feeling a bit out of control, I found for the first time in my life that I was truly happy. The feeling of such satisfaction came as a surprise since I was not yet a writer. I realized my feelings of pleasure came the moment I made the decision to write. My gratification is steadily growing as I pass each check point on my new course. Happiness did not wait for me to break the ribbon at the finish line. Instead, it escalates with each step closer I come. The time I have to fulfill my dream is only limited to the time I have here on earth. Since I do not have to compete against someone else I can regulate my pace as needed. Some goals are harder than others so they will require more focus. Other goals are only monotonously long and require

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endurance. Even if they are both hard and long, my feeling of satisfaction will remain intact. Remember, happiness is in the pursuit and not just tied to the completion of the course. That is why there is no pressure having to revamp a route or alter the pace because of detours. Detours will be unavoidable. You can forgo the frustrations they bring if you will remember you can reroute a course.

Look again at Paul Mariani's life. He needed to reroute his course twice from what we know of his life. The first time occurred after his and Victoria's separation. Paul reassessed his dream, then reroutes his course to achieve it. Major set backs and detours threatened to dissuade him but still he is able to persevere. The San Francisco earthquake killed thousands of lives and destroyed many more dreams. Paul was not one of its casualties. What was it that allowed Paul to continue when many others crumpled along with the buildings? I believe he would not have been able to succeed without a dream. It allowed him to be tenacious when others felt overwhelmed. Striving towards a dream makes you grow stronger. How many people would travel half way around the world, give up their family inheritance, live in virtual poverty, work twelve hours of back-breaking work daily all for the fulfillment of an impractical dream? Many would never be able to do it even for practical dreams. Paul knew that money and success could not replace his dream.

We were taught early in life that, dreamers are losers who never taste success. That is

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why so many successful people are miserable. Their focus is on the accumulation of wealth. They have been so busy being practical or successful in someone else's eyes that they did not notice their hearts being emptied of their own dreams. That is what happened to me.

I heard it said that wealth is a yardstick that never measures up. It's elusive and equivocal. It's easy to feel you never have enough. That is why we can compare it to being on a treadmill. You can run on it a long time but the view never changes. The finish line is nowhere in sight. Ideally, money needs to be a tool to reach a dream, not the dream itself. Use it to buy the equipment needed to reach your goals during the race. Paul needed it every step of the way from Komiza, Yugoslavia to Cupertino, California. I need it no less today. There is no question of money's value. The mistake comes from making it the prize.

Since money was not Paul's prize he found the courage to give up his inheritance. The significant changes Paul made on a continual basis, during the course of his life, in no way altered his distention. I have decided to take my lead from this story of success. Here, in the beautiful city of Cupertino, there are still ample opportunities to work towards making a dream come true. Paul's reluctance to move away from this area is understandable. The spirit here encourages dreamers in their race towards fulfillment. Cupertino even provides a vast array of goals in which to choose. Every type of business and education imaginable is within walking or biking distance.

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In closing allow me restate that happiness comes from the active pursuit of your heart's destiny. The first step towards happiness then is to search your heart for its dream.

When we compared life to a race, a heart's destiny is like providing that race with a meaningful finish line. Next, set up necessary goals to mark the course you wish to take to reach that finish line. Finally, do not allow excuses, well meaning advice, or even natural disasters to keep you from reaching the culmination of that destiny. If you have a destination, and you plan your course,(rerouting whenever necessary), your heart cannot help singing with joy.. If, in reaching your dream you are unfulfilled than, perhaps you did not allow yourself to dream deep enough. Having made that mistake myself I understand any non-climatic feeling you may be experiencing. Don't be afraid to redirect the course. Reach deeper inside and gain the courage to start again. I am glad I did. If you do, you will find as Paul did and as I have that happiness is a by-product that comes while you are actively pursuing your dreams.

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