



Welcome Mid-March 2020!

Internationally, this week has seen the ramping up of anxiety and concern (for some, panic) over the effects of Covid-19 (aka "Corona virus"), since its declaration as a "pandemic" by the World Health Organization (WHO). None of us has gone unaffected, whether by aborted business or leisure travel plans; cancelled public events that have been months or years in the planning (e.g. the Juno awards in Saskatoon); the implementing of an employer's *ad hoc*, work-at-home policy; to those whose handwashing and cough hygiene has not saved them from contracting a virus, whether the Covid one, or not.

While I have felt frustrated by the hoarding done by some Saskatonians of products like toilet paper and hand sanitizer at grocery and bulk supply stores, I am equally heartened by acts of kindness I've experienced from neighbours and friends: one person left an emergency stack of toilet paper near the door of my home office, knowing I had not had time to "stock up" before the shortage began. Another friend wrote me a quick email from nearly 10,000 kms away, seeking reassurance that a family member was (still) well--and yes, we are faring well, thank you!

In his opening paragraph to *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens writes: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." The expression seems to me to govern much of the past 48 hours of panic (advanced, by no coincidence by Donald Trump's travel bans, ignorance and arrogance). But I pray that rational minds and sensible self-care will bring an end to the pandemic, sooner rather than later. I wish this for you, good reader, and for everyone who shares our beautiful and troubled planet.

Those seeking guidance through this storm would be best advised to read [daily updates from the World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#):

(or copy and paste the following address:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>)

Updates on local information (in SK) can be found online at this [URL](#):

(or copy and past the following address: <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/health-care-administration-and-provider-resources/treatment-procedures-and-guidelines/emerging-public-health-issues/2019-novel-coronavirus>)

Anyone without internet access can watch the W5 television special airing Saturday evening (7:00 pm CST) on CTV. It will feature the rational interventions recommended by WHO leadership.

And let's not forget to read the classics, including the novels of Dickens, and, if you're so inclined, the *Old Testament*, where the calamities of earlier millennia serve as reminders that this particular flu virus embodies no challenge that is new to our species.

Let calm heads prevail!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

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Article One: Serendipity and “A Tale of Two Sisters”: Cookbook Author Janet Podleski Inspires Entrepreneurs at the 24th Annual Raj Manek Memorial Banquet

On the 24th anniversary of the Raj Manek Memorial Banquet, guests were entertained and inspired by the keynote speech of Canadian entrepreneur, Janet Podleski. As serendipity would have it, it was also the 24th anniversary of the release of *Looneyspoons*, the breakout, bestselling cookbook that Janet co-authored with her sister, the cook, Greta Podleski (1996).

Janet gave up a “good job” as a sales executive in a computer software company, to undertake a “secret project”—a cookbook that delivered both nutritional information and humour in the margins surrounding Greta’s wonderful recipes. Greta was the genius cook and Janet, a talented marketer and gifted writer. Above all, they loved to laugh.

Part of the success the sisters achieved came from their refusal to let barriers stop them—Greta had “no formal culinary training,” and neither of them “any food industry experience, publishing experience or money.” They cashed in their savings and RRSPs to launch the project, working 14 months without income. It was a long haul that saw them spending \$10K in groceries over eight months, cooking five or six meals per day, so that every day felt like they were “making Christmas dinner.”

By the time they developed a draft of the book, they were a full \$80K in debt, “owed everyone” money, including “three credit cards, racked to the limit.” Janet even sold her car and wedding dress to inject the project with some much needed cash. At various times, both sisters felt desperate and ready to give up. They knew the statistics that the world publishes a new cookbook every five hours.

When all of the eight American publishers whom they sent the draft of their cookbook refused it, saying it was “not suitable” to blend food with humour, Janet and Greta persevered, knowing in their gut that their book “would change people’s lives for the better, if they could only get it on store shelves.”

With their Polish immigrant mother praying for them, within six weeks they had a watershed moment: Dave Chilton (of *The Wealth Barber* fame) agreed, on the advice of his mother (herself a good cook), to “help those girls publish their book!”: Dave’s mother had declared that the

recipes were not just the “best *healthy* food” she’d ever eaten, but “the best food, *period!*” Dave provided the funding and the experience with publishing that the project needed.

In Canada, a bestselling book sells 10,000 copies (in total). Chilton’s *The Wealthy Barber* had sold 25,000 copies. But between September 1996 and September 1997, *Looneyspoons* sold 325,000 copies, holding the number one spot on the Canadian bestseller list for 85 consecutive weeks!

Two other books followed, each of which won awards. Their fourth and final book, *The Looneyspoons Collection*, became another bestseller in 2012, featuring new nutritional information, and “the best of” their earlier recipes, updated to meet the needs of gluten intolerant and other sensitive eaters. Janet said that the final cookbook was the one they were “meant to write,” for which the earlier three were practice.

She maintains that the “secret recipe” of the sisters’ books was their humour—saying that she and Greta “dreamed in puns.” Some recipe titles are “Jurassic Pork,” “Tuna Turner,” “Mission Shrimpossible,” and “Celine Dijon Chicken.” The cookbooks were also down-to-earth, using ingredients commonly found in readers’ fridges and pantries and in everyday grocery stores.

Along the 16 year life of their project, the sisters also created kitchen gadgets; designed recipe greeting cards; hosted a popular television show, appeared on thousands of television and radio shows across the US and Canada and even created a line of frozen food at Costco.

Most gratifying, Janet says, has been the feedback from thousands of fans—“Moms, seniors, teenagers, college students and everyone in-between,” who wrote of losing weight; overcoming illness and disease, including eating disorders; and feeding even the fussiest children’s appetites.

Janet said that she has found that “not getting what you want” is sometimes how serendipity works, that it is “sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck. The worst thing that ever happened to you can turn out to be the best thing that ever happened. . . . A lot of times when you look back, the most devastating things turn out to be a blessing in disguise, a real gift.” Her repeated knee injuries led her to read about mind-body medicine that later culminated in a career that followed the cookbooks, in natural nutrition.

Being rejected by multiple publishers, for instance, led them to meet Dave Chilton and to self-publish *Looneytunes*, their greatest personal and professional successes to date.

Whether by Divine Guidance or luck, Janet observed that the success has brought “new worlds of possibilities that opened” to her and a “better life” than she “ever dreamed of in a million years Anything is possible if you follow your heart, listen to your gut and leave room for a little serendipity and synchronicity.”

And now it's your turn: How does Janet and Greta Podleski's (rags to riches) story inspire your entrepreneurial excellence?

Please weigh in; I'd be delighted to hear your stories, too.

STORYTELLER'S CORNER: Do we need words like "deplane?"

With this past week's escalation of Covid-19 restrictions on travel and with the importance of "social isolation" by those with symptoms, it's appropriate to look at examples of *jargon* that aggravate American etymologist, Bryan Garner.

This month, the case of "deplane": Garner writes that "deplane" is indeed jargon, alongside other terms like "enplane" and "reinplane" (yikes!), which he labels as "AIRLINESE," dating to the latter half of the 20th century.

Garner cautions us that we should use conservative, everyday language, saying: "Careful writers and speakers stick to such time honoured expressions as 'get off' the plane, 'get on' the plane, and 'get on [the plane] again.' "

As in every aspect of life, these days, deflating the rhetoric and simplifying our language serves the greatest good of our communities of readers and writers.

SHOP NEWS:



I am particularly grateful this month to the the Saskatoon firefighters who raised an aging family member of mine after a fall. Caregivers for aging family members know the risks of losing balance and falling. To have service by the firefighters, when no medical intervention is required, is a tremendous gift. Thank you, Saskatoon firefighters!

With great sadness, I must report that friend and mentor (former COO of Failure Prevention Services) and extraordinary painter, Bob Pitzel, has been moved into palliative care, in Humboldt's hospital. A recent scan showed a new tumour and the treatments have weakened Bob beyond the point of recovery. All of us in the Raj Manek Mentorship Program community are heartbroken and send our love to his partner and caregiver, Maureen Doetzel.

I wouldn't have weathered the stresses and strains of entrepreneurship in Saskatchewan without Bob's generosity, insight and humour; I have many more tears to shed.

In the marketing world, I'm particularly grateful this month to American newsletter guru, Michael Katz. Michael's recent webinar on storytelling in marketing was powerfully insightful and I continue

to work with its implications in my writing. When I laugh in my blog and newsletter writing, I think first of Michael and his humour!

Many thanks also go out this month to the wonderful Patti Pokorchak, marketing specialist and professional coach, who serves on the board of the Toronto chapter of the Canadian Association of Public Speakers (CAPS). Patti shared some insightful marketing strategy with me, as I continue to explore new markets for my services.

And special thanks to you, my readers, whose emails and text messages remind me that you are still engaged by this newsletter, more than seven years since its genesis (the last six of which are indexed on my current website).

ABOUT US:

Between 2011 and December 2018, Elizabeth Shih Communications chronicled the stories of B2B marketing and communications on the Prairies and across the country.

Effective January 1, 2019, I rebranded as "Storytelling Communications." I now write marketing and communications documents and lead workshops that help small- and medium-sized businesses to close more sales by communicating more effectively; and immigrant entrepreneurs to strengthen their businesses or secure better jobs.

Interested in learning more? Please contact me through my CASL-compliant website (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I receive your message, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

Please visit my website for more information (www.storytellingcommunications.ca).