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THE TIME is always right TO DO what is right

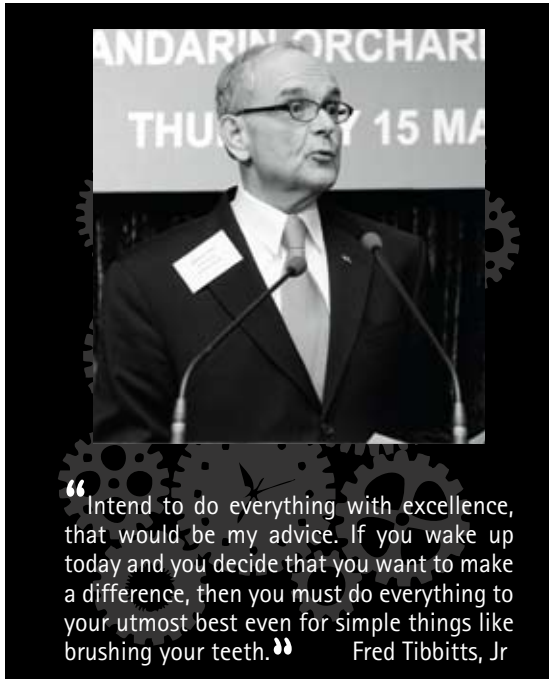
“There was a line Fred Tibbitts, Jr delivered towards the end of his remark at the dinner I attended which left an indelible impression on me – “serving with an open heart and right intention is the foundation of our hospitality industry.”
Peter A Knipp

The late, great Martin Luther King, Jr once said, “The time is always right to do what is right.” Recently, I met with someone whom accurately embodies the essence of that King’s quote on time. I had the great opportunity to sit down together with him for an unforgettable chat. Growing up in a wealthy family and building a successful career for himself in the foodservice business over the years, Fred Tibbitts, Jr decided to give it all away and start his path to giving back to society. He felt it was the right time to do the right thing. He set up Fred Tibbitts & Associates, Inc (FTA) as a global social entrepreneurship with the company operating via outsourcing all functions. He does not draw any salary and all expenses are kept at the minimum. All profits, monthly and annually, made by the company are then donated to the less fortunate in Asia Pacific and the United States. Moreover, every year, all over the world, Tibbitts organises annual FTA dinners where guests are encouraged to make charitable contributions benefiting United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Last March, I had the opportunity to attend the Singapore dinner at Mandarin Orchard Singapore and I was given the utmost honour by Tibbitts to propose a toast to the guests that evening. Prior to my toast, a tradition of these dinners is Tibbitts’ welcome remarks. This year, he began by saying, “An industry is only as strong as the wisdom, vision, compassion and actions of its leaders; leaders who define excellence for the benefit of all those who look to them to know the way to

realise their dreams and ambitions and not be left behind.” A strong believer that service is the highest calling, he continued, “In the end, we are judged not by whom we include, but by whom we exclude. Great leaders inspire and teach all those who seek to be included because serving the least of us are truly the highest calling and the only measure of service from the heart.” Truly heart-warming and inspiring!

A man of the hospitality industry, Tibbitts believes that the greatest pleasure he gets from doing what he does is the opportunity to serve those less fortunate. He explained, “What I set out to do have truly impacted my life tremendously. I find it most rewarding to be a great mentor to anyone who needs my guidance and to me, it’s equally important to be an example to others.” He continued by quoting the famous Chinese saying, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” How true a saying this is! For Tibbitts, his greatest success, so far, is definitely what he can do for others – the very nature of the hospitality industry. “It is not what we do for ourselves, but what we do for others that are the measure of our worth to humanity.” Unquestionably, we should do it simply because it is the right thing to do and not because we want recognition for it. Tibbitts is known the world over for his groundbreaking contributions to the beverage industry. Among his many roles are Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide’s international wine consultant for more than a decade as well as being one of the

pioneers of the famed wine-by-the-glass programme. Without doubt, he remains the world's top wine-by-the-glass consultant. Even for someone at this juncture of his life, Tibbitts' humility stays intact as he divulged, "Every aspect of life is a learning experience. It helps us grow as a person." Keeping an open mind is as important.



"Intend to do everything with excellence, that would be my advice. If you wake up today and you decide that you want to make a difference, then you must do everything to your utmost best even for simple things like brushing your teeth." Fred Tibbitts, Jr

Believing in the power of words, he often seeks motivation from great inspirations before him. One whom he constantly turns to is Mahatma Gandhi. In a piece he wrote in 2009, he quoted Gandhi, "be the change you seek". When asked how he finds the motivation to change, he said, "In life, there can only be two ways; either we become a part of the solution or a part of the problem. So, it depends on which you choose that will make that impact or change in your life. The motivation comes from within you. For example, if you want to be thin, you live your life as a thin person. You eat as a thin person and you do things as a thin person." Of course, he went on to say that everything we do in our lives must be practical; only then you will find happiness in the process. "Intend to do everything with excellence, that would be my advice. If you wake up today and you decide that you want to make a difference, then you must do everything to your utmost best even for simple things like brushing your teeth," he effused. There was a line he delivered towards the end of his remark at the dinner I attended which left an indelible impression on me – "serving with an open heart and right intention

is the foundation of our hospitality industry". I can't help but agree tremendously with him, as I feel too that this is what underpins living life to the fullest. I brought up an issue which as someone who has made quite an impact to the way the beverage industry is today, I felt he would feel strongly about – drunk driving. This problem has in some ways revolutionised the way people are drinking as well as the ways

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companies are selling their alcoholic drinks. Do turn to page 29 and 35 as we tackle this issue in our News + Views section with expert opinions from professionals and consumers. We also look at how our eating habits impact the environment. Back to the matter at hand, I wanted to hear how Tibbitts feels about this issue and how he thinks the hospitality industry can help. "I believe the hospitality industry can do its part by being more proactive in educating, subtly, their guests. It should be a conscious effort by all groups involved, be it the end user, the person selling the alcohol or the company making it," he opined. The current effort in place includes the Drink Responsibly, Drive Responsibly campaign which Tibbitts felt should be replaced by a stronger and more suitable one. "It should be the Don't Drink & Drive campaign. There should always be a designated driver and if there isn't one, the drinker should make the choice of taking public transport back from his drinking session," he surmised. Drinking and now, eating sensibly should be a part of our everyday lives. As the world currently has a population of seven billion people, it is our individual responsibility to ensure we cause the least amount of impact to our planet. As I reflect on what were shared with me by Tibbitts, I can't help but think of what Gandhi once said, "There is enough in our world for everyone's needs, but not for anyone's greed." Constantly, we must know what is the right thing to do at the right time.

What inspires and motivates you? What are your views on drinking and eating responsibly? Please share with me your thoughts on www.facebook.com/p.knipp or you can also tweet me at @PeterAKnipp.

Peter A Knipp