

Michael Dardick: Perspectives from Abroad

By MICHAEL W. DARDICK July 25th, 2012 7:57am

I just returned from an overseas trip, and part of the excursion was certainly about perspective. It is hard to view a 1,000-year-old construction and not be impressed that it is still standing! Moreover, all the ornate stonework in these old buildings leaves one awestruck at the craftsmanship.

One perspective was that I felt like us modern-day developers and contractors could learn something from all this. Then, I was talking to an Italian guy, and he was explaining how the city badly needed new drainage systems and that the government was working on it. I asked if the work was going to start soon and he replied "They have been planning for 15 years ... this is Italy." Well, that's another perspective!



You know, when you're away from the daily toils of home and you're in a quaint place, it's easy to get seduced into thinking, "It would be cool to live here." Well, I have to tell you, walking to dinner through narrow, cobblestone streets and walkways with sidewalk cafes and people mingling about can do that to you. Of course, the flip side of those

narrow streets is no parking, difficult traffic, small dented vehicles (think "The Incredibles"), Vespa's going every which way, and no chance of escaping the incessant smoking in which everyone seems to partake. Two different perspectives on the same streets!

But these observations are really two sides of a coin—different perspectives —neither right nor wrong, just choices. Now, those choices are important to our lives, but a choice that makes me happy may be exactly opposite of another ... who has a different perspective. If you live a generally happy life, then you are likely "biased" to believe what you think or like is "right." How often do any of us pick neighborhoods, churches, or clubs where everyone believes differently than us? Not often, because homogeneity of thoughts is more comfortable.

Well, we have a Presidential election coming up, and some very important problems to deal with. Most of us, due to our upbringing, geography, etc., have a bias toward one party or the other, Republican or Democratic. Likely, most of us only listen to the television and radio programs that reflect our view and make us more assured we are "right." Because we are at a very important time in America, I have decided to really try to listen to the "other" side with open ears and set aside my biased perspective, so I can really hear. I call it listening with my *American* ears, not my Republican or Democratic ears.

Although this may or may not change my final view, I am certain I will learn more. I'm also pretty certain that the ultimate right answers don't lie in any party line, but in a combination of ideas. I just hope our representatives will choose American answers and not just Republican or Democratic ones.

Lastly, I came home from Europe with a very similar outlook to the one I had 30 years ago, when I returned home as a college hitchhiker (yes, I am "that old"). And that outlook was that it was really great to see another part of the world and experience other cultures, but I am damn glad to be an American! That's my perspective!

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