

Mike Carroll takes us on a path of self-less discovery

BY BRIT MOTT

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN that our most memorable experiences are those that include an adrenaline rush. One, because a chemical reaction occurs in our bodies. And two, more often than not, those experiences are shared with others. Think back to your last family reunion, group outing, or party. Some of our best memories are experiences shared with friends and family.

Mike Carroll, author of *It's Not About You...It Never Was: Living Your Story Aware and Connected*, believes that our lives are meant to be shared. "This book is about our connections to one another. With



Author **Mike Carroll**. Profile photo/Mike Newman

the explosion of the Technology Age, we tend to live in a self-centered society, but I am convinced that our reason for being here is really for each other," he says. "You can't learn anything in this life by yourself."

Mike argues that very little of our experiences are for our own knowledge, and furthermore, shared experiences are oftentimes *shared!* Some of the most enjoyable conversations over dinner include stories of group outings, parties, reunions, and vacations. Rarely do we keep shared experiences to ourselves.

Even in hard times, when self-pity weighs in our hearts, Mike suggests making a conscious effort to focus on someone else. Typically, we ask, "Why is this happening to me?" but Mike poses, "What I am supposed to be learning through this that is going to help somebody else?" He says, "It really does come down to whether we choose to see ourselves as victims of this life or the owners of the circumstances we face."

It's Not About You...It Never Was speaks to readers who believe in something or someone greater than themselves, although Mike hopes that anybody who reads the book, religious or not, will get the message. And there's more than one message to consider.

For example, all of us go through life with people who frustrate us, who make us want to scream, and Mike writes, "In recent years, I have changed my question to God from, 'When is this yo-yo going to be out of my life?' to something a little more constructive, 'What do I have to share with this individual?'"

He continues, "So, the book is more about how you choose to live your life. Do you look at it from your own perspective or from the perspective of others who come and go—and that's got nothing to do with religion."

Shared experiences can come in small packages. A simple, kind word is just as important as sharing a meal with a homeless person or taking a grandiose family vacation. "Saying 'good morning' or 'good afternoon,' can change somebody's day," Mike proffers.

For his job, Mike travels and frequently finds himself in airports, sitting back and observing passers-by. "I watch people getting so zoned in with what they're doing, that they're not aware of what's going on around them—other people who have needs. Most of us are so focused on our own lives, we miss pivotal moments where we could really be impacting others' lives."

Again, going back to the book's theme that collective experiences are designed to be shared (even at the airport), Mike encourages his readers that sharing also means teaching. "I'm convinced that each generation is supposed to be teaching the other," he says. "We're not supposed to be reinventing the wheel over and over again."

The author suggests one way we teach each other is to record our stories so that we can pass them on to our children. Having a written (or digital) record of our stories ensures accuracy, too. "Even if you don't want to write a book," says Mike, "journaling or recording your thoughts, memories, and life lessons is important. My dad is 77 and I've encouraged him to write down some of those experiences that he had as a kid, going to the ballpark with friends.... Most of us try to re-tell those stories and we usually don't get it right."

After raising three children with Angie, his wife of 21 years, Mike has a wealth of stories to share, and some of them are weaved throughout this book. Angie is the Marketing and Public Relations Manager and Volunteer and Event Coordinator for the Heritage Farmstead Museum in Plano. The couple moved here in 1996 because they were impressed by the school district. Their three teenage daughters, Shannon, Megan, and Caitlin, all attend Plano schools.

When Mike's not spending time with his family, he's cultivating a 10-year career with the Hyatt as Vice President of Operations (Central Region). He's also busy working on his second book, *Moved to Tears When the Soul Steps Forward* (a working title). "It's about heart-felt connections, or moved-to-tears moments—a wedding, having a baby, a death—experiences that get your emotions going,"




he says. "I think we should actually create more of those for each other. The true you comes forward when the most emotional you comes forward, not the analytical person who likes checklists. We need to create those kinds of moments every day."

Mike shares that he enjoys going to work and finding the most stoic employees and making them laugh. The gesture points to his previous message that directing your attention to others can result in a richer life. Both parties walk away with a memorable, shared experience.

How, then, does the author define a fulfilling life? He pauses and reflects on the question. "For me, it's looking for those opportunities to help someone find their God-like abilities. If I can help you discover a passion or skill set, something that enables you to show compassion for somebody, or forgiveness, or humility, if I can help draw that out in you, I have done one of the things that I came in this life to do."

He adds, "Passion. You've got to find what moves you...moments when you stop and go 'Wow.' What causes that? It's generally caused because you engage in something you know is right. To me, that's God going, 'You're doing what you're supposed to be doing.'

"Finally, a fulfilling life is one of energy, drive and enthusiasm where you are constantly trying to make this a better world in whatever capacity, whether in your relationships or in your work or home...it doesn't matter. A fulfilling life is making the world better." 

excerpt

From *It's Not About You...It Never Was*

The more you chase what you don't have, the greater you perpetuate the illusion of joy through acquisition. It is only through giving that we find deep emotional peace. What I own should be changed in thought to what I share.



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