

FAITH AND VALUES: C

*Grab the brass ring,
as Dad would say*

If all goes well and I don't get lost somewhere in Europe, by the time you read this column I will have visited London, Paris and Rome with my sister, Janice, and should be on my way home to Morganton — no doubt very, very homesick for the place I've grown



**As I
see it**

Peg DeMarco

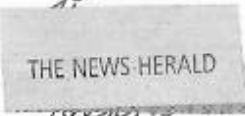
to love, my husband and all my animals. Offered an opportunity to debut and promote the first of two novels being re-released by my publisher at the International Book Fair in London, I knew it was just too good to pass up. The fair is a yearly event where authors

from around the world have an opportunity to mingle with each other and sign copies of their work. It gives them a chance to meet with global producers, publishers and distributors who strive to bring books of all genres to the world through roundtable discussions, power packed seminars and informational lectures.

It's a first for me, but particularly exciting because authors and publishers from as far away as Australia and New Zealand will make the trek to London and producers from Italy, France and Spain will be well represented. And you know how much we, as Americans, love those "spaghetti" westerns where Clint Eastwood started many, many years ago.

True, it's a long way to go to hawk a couple of books and shake hands with a lot of strangers, but there are other more important reasons that I decided to dig into my savings and treat me and my sister to this once in a lifetime event.

Morganton



First of all, it gives me some precious time to spend with my baby sister. We both lead jam-packed, busy lives, her with three children, a loving spouse (who sweetly saved money unbeknownst to her and presented her with some "souvenir dough" recently) and a full time job at Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte. We seldom have time to talk and less time to see each other for even an hour alone.

Second, at 57, I've come to realize that sometimes you have to do something somewhat irrational to get rational. My dad once said that he had an opportunity to move to California some 50 years ago when that great state was just beginning to boom. But after tossing it around, and perhaps allowing trepidation to decide for him, he passed up the chance to relocate. However, in hindsight, he always wondered what his and his family's lives would have been like if he had taken the chance. When he told me this story, he finished by telling me to "grab the brass ring" when it swung in my direction because taking a chance, although frightening, is the stepping stone to success rather than letting it pass by in fear and allowing someone else to grab hold of it.

Next, like every other American, the tragedy and eye-opening events of Sept. 11, 2001 now play a major part in how I view life. When I'm confronted with a path in the road, I don't hesitate like I used to — I simply select a road and take it. Sure, Europe will be there tomorrow ... but will I?

And, lastly, every time I pack a suitcase, I tend to think of my mom. None of my family knows exactly why, but my mom always longed to see Switzerland. She's gone now and I regret so much not buying tickets for the both of us, packing a suitcase and handing her a pair of earmuffs to keep her warm.

So, that's really the basis of this column. I encourage all of you to follow your dreams and your heart and let those around you know how much you value and love them. And when the brass ring swings in your direction, don't let it slip by and end up wondering what could have been.

PEG DEMARCO is a local columnist for The News Herald.