



De's Dazzles – Ride Out the Storm

Anyone familiar with Midwest weather is familiar with tornadoes. Sometimes it's a gentle breeze & sunshine. Other times, the wind rises, the sky darkens, & a terrible storm we never saw coming, nears. Many years ago, as a fourth grader, I remember a bright sunny day in May. After school, I went to church youth choir. My mother picked me up after the rehearsal and drove us home under dark threatening skies in the nick of time. Upon finding our safe spot in the southwest corner of our basement, we stood firm, anchored our feet down & rode out the storm. Within a minute, our two-story home was lifted off its foundation and gone, utterly gone. Moments later, we climbed out of the basement to a landscape that was unrecognizable. For as far as my eyes could see, every house flattened, trees uprooted, & in the eerie quiet there was complete mayhem. This massive F5 tornado shaped my life!

I learned how quick a blink of an eye really is and that I am not in control. Sure, I schedule events up to 18 months out at the Corning Opera House, but despite all my scheduling, planning, and organizing, I am not in control. All I can do is go with the flow when concerts get cancelled, and dates get postponed. I am not privy to what the weather will be like in 18 months or what other events will transpire in someone's life. Gratitude becomes my focus. I am thankful there's email, radio, Facebook, and other ways to inform people of changes. I adapt!

After my tornado experience, I learned to be creative using sticks to make dolls, because I did not have a single item to my name. With our most recent cancellation I was upset because our tech personnel had scheduled time off their regular job to work on the concert. BUT we have recently acquired a cyclorama curtain (more on that in a later update) and needed several hours to hang it, so our tech people were able to do it on the date of the cancelled show. Overwhelming gratitude that it worked out so well!

After the tornado, I was thunderstruck by all the people (family, friends, & strangers) who quickly emerged to help. Crawling out of our basement, we met our neighbor, Marvin, who was the only male within a couple blocks & took charge of the situation. Assessing the electrical lines, the gas smell, nails protruding from boards, he led us out of the wreckage. As evening descended, many uprooted people spent the night in a with strangers, sleeping on the sofa, chairs, & floor. I was fortunate to have a blanket that served as my pillow & cover. Sometimes we are blinded to the good in difficult situations, but I believe we should appreciate the blessings. Strangers sheltered & fed me!

After the tornado my family lived with my grandparents for many months. That tornado taught me to get by with a little, to keep going, and I will never have all the answers. One month we have a sold-out concert and the next month we do not even sell ten tickets! One month we have 15 rentals, the next month we have one rental. Even though we have prepared for the events, signed contracts, found volunteers, purchased concessions, prepared meals, secured hotel rooms, lined up the tech crew – storms come. There's misinformation, lack of information, rumors, and fears. We do not know or control the weather or other situations. I do know, we will not just camp out in the storm. We will take one step at a time. I discovered the real treasures are the people, whether it be the performer, the audience, the volunteers, the sponsors, the renters, the tourists or whoever enters this historic 1902 grand lady! Here's hoping you stay anchored in life's storms.

Sincerely,
De Heaton, Executive Director
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