

BUSINESS

ARBOR OUTLOOK

Brevity, levity and bidding 2016 adieu



Margaret McDowell

“Everybody walks past a thousand story ideas every day.”

— **Orson Scott Card**

The process of penning this column is one of my greatest joys. You are one of over 1 million people who read it weekly in 26 newspapers in three states. Thank you for being among that number. I am humbled by the opportunity to connect with you via the written word.

You are reading my last 2016 effort. Beginning in

mid-January, I will again attempt 49 consecutive weekly columns. Paragraphs that pop will be my goal. As Jack Kerouac said: “It ain’t whatcha write about, it’s the way atcha write it.” Obviously, though, I still search for salient topics.

Column ideas sprout like kudzu. I read the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal cover to cover daily, and a dozen other papers online. I seek movies about entrepreneurs or business successes and think, “There may be a column there.” Snippets of books, television shows, articles in periodicals and gleanings from respected and credentialed sources provide potential subjects. I watched “Shark Tank” one night and wrote about it

the next week. My husband encouraged me to sit through “Cinderella Man” (I hate boxing movies) and I was moved by Jim Braddock’s financial journey outside the ring. That became a column.

Some columns evolve from my experience serving as an investment advisor for 22 years. I managed money through the dot-com bubble and through the Great Recession. Laboring during those eras provides perspective and parameters. As I write this, the Dow Jones is at an all-time high. Of course it won’t stay there. Markets fluctuate, and every day provides a different, new and challenging environment. Successful investing and prudent financial planning

can be difficult and daunting work, and everyone needs a nudge in the right direction. Hopefully, you’ve drawn encouragement and even a good idea occasionally from this year’s tomes.

There are a few guidelines to which I adhere. The first is to employ brevity and levity. Space limitations demand the former and you deserve the latter, when I can provide it. If I can cause you to smile, laugh, reflect, or on rare good days, be entertained, encouraged or inspired, we’ve communicated effectively.

Another guideline is to build each effort around one central theme. This week’s? The secret to investing success is that there is no secret. Build a nest egg and get invested.

Buy good companies at a fair price. Know what you own and why you own it. Trust in what you are doing and avoid panic selling when markets downtrend. Eschew checking your accounts every 15 minutes. Resign yourself to a three- to five-year time horizon for your investments to exhibit significant progress.

Did we connect? See you in ’17.

Margaret R. McDowell, ChFC®, AIF®, author of the syndicated economic column “Arbor Outlook”, is the founder of Arbor Wealth Management, LLC, (850-608-6121 — www.arborwealth.net), a fee-only Registered Investment Advisory Firm located near Sandestin.