



### Who's In Charge?

**J**UST GIVE ME ONE MINUTE, AND I'LL BE right back," I called down the hallway, hand lifted slightly in the air, as I slowly backed into my office. Quietly shutting the door, I turned sharply and darted across the room, grabbing my phone and frantically dialing. *Ring. Ring. Ring. Ring. Ri* – "Hey!" my sister's voice came through the phone. "How's the first day on the job?"

"Help," I hissed in a loud whisper. "I don't know what to do. I think I'm in charge!"

That was the scene nine and a half years, and 70 issues ago, in July 2004, as I stood in my office on my first day of work at *Spokane Coeur d'Alene Living*. I had been feeling calm all morning until Jim, one of our advertising salesman asked me if we could meet with a client to discuss my planned content approach for the magazine. What? I was passionate about writing and thrilled at the prospect of a job where I would be paid to do what I loved, but it hadn't really dawned on me that along with writing, I was taking on the responsibility of being in charge of the magazine. Planning content? Assigning writers? Hiring and firing writers? Critiquing their work? Managing the editorial production side? Making calls on what to cover, what not to cover? Setting the tone for the magazine? The weight of the responsibility suddenly seemed huge – especially with a deadline looming over me.

"Tell them you'll get back to them at the end of the day," my sister reassuringly said. "You'll buy yourself some time, and you will figure it out. You can do this."

She was right. I did figure it out. I muddled my way through and I succeeded. As I put pen to paper on my editor's letter in my very first issue, I wrote the following:

*"Whenever I fly, I am struck by the extreme amount of coordination necessary to successfully get a flight off the ground, into the air, and en route to its destination. There are so many variables,*

*which go into the success of a flight. Properly working equipment, each passenger coordinating their complex, personal schedules in order to get to the airport on time, the weather cooperating, and the correct luggage loaded onto the right aircraft are all parts of the equation. Once everything and everyone is on board, the pilots are on a strict schedule to get the plane off the ground and to their destination at the scheduled time. Inevitably, as the plane races to the end of the runway and reaches its nose into the air, the same thought always runs through my head, "I hope we make it!"*

*On this, my first flight with Spokane Coeur d'Alene Living, I have learned that putting together a magazine is much like a journey in an airplane. The coordination that goes into the pages, which you hold in your hands, is remarkable. Developing story ideas, assigning them to writers who will find the story within the story, dealing with delays and setbacks, getting completed stories in on time, fitting the text into the layout, and finding photographs to match the pictures painted with words. As we race down the runway towards the deadline, reaching ever closer to the printing press, I have one thought running through my head, "I hope we make it!"*

Make it we did. With the help of our art director, David Crary, we developed a system to get every issue completed on time. When lead graphic designer Kristi Somday joined us in October 2007, the process became even more streamlined. Now, 70 issues later for me, 91 for David, 50 for Kristi, and 100 issues for the magazine itself, we're still doing it. Together, we make a great team!

There have been challenges, trials and rough experiences along the way, and at times I have thought, like with that first issue, I hope we make it! Through it all, I've also learned some lessons that have helped. (The first lesson is that I must have a penchant for flying because here comes another airplane analogy!)

I am a total chicken when it comes to flying. All I need is my own beak and feathers and I'd be good to go. I feel out of control as I sit in what I perceive to be a frightening and unknown situation (sitting in a metal tube, filled with flammable material, 35,000 feet in the air.) One thought that comforts me though, is a line from *The Airplane Prayer*, written by Norman Vincent Peale, which sticks with me whenever I fly: "We place ourselves confidently in Your hands. We give You thanks for Your watchful care knowing that, even as You hold us in Your great hands on the ground, You also hold us here in the air."

Going through challenges, trials and rough experiences in life is much like flying. We are in a flammable situation, we don't feel the steady ground under our feet, we can't quickly escape; rather we have to stick out the duration of the flight and land gently. But when you do land, the destination that awaits is well worth the work to get there. For those times when panic sets in, and you realize the weight of responsibility resting upon your shoulders as the one in charge, it helps to step back and realize, regardless of what we face, who is holding us in His hands, and who is really in charge.

Happy reading of our 100<sup>th</sup> issue!

*Blythe*