

## ***The Answer is Right There... Are You Listening?***

**by Carol Slater**

Ever hear the voice of Spirit telling you what to do? I did. And the *Smartest Thing* I ever did was to listen and take the recommended action.

My story begins in 1992, in Sedona, Arizona, back in the days when campgrounds there were free and widely available. Having just terminated a painful relationship and moved out with too little money in my jeans to rent a place of my own, I was camping out. Obviously, I was going to have to figure out how to support myself. People with Ph.D.'s were working three jobs as waiters and trail guides just to survive, and I knew that wasn't for me. So I decided I would start my own business. Itemizing my skills and experience, I concluded that my best bet would be to interview retirees and record their stories, and sell them tape packages for their grandchildren. I even designed a brochure... but I never got around to launching the business.

One afternoon, while out for a walk, I heard a distinct voice inside my head. “Do something to help people get the word out!” it said. That got my attention, you'd better believe. “Like what?” I asked. “Like a newspaper, or a magazine,” the voice replied.

I'd never published a newspaper or a magazine—never even considered that as a possibility. But it occurred to me that I had all the pieces: I had edited my high school paper, written press releases, designed brochures, promoted training programs...

I thought it over for a few days before walking into the *Red Rock News* to talk to the publisher, who favored me with an indulgent smile and referred me to a printing company two-and-a-half hours away in Casa Grande. I thanked him—I thought he was being helpful! It took me awhile to realize he'd just wanted to get rid of me.

By any reasonable standards my prospects were deplorable. My old Mac 12K would crank out word processing, but not layout. I had no home, no printer, no office, no phone, nowhere to go to design a mockup of my new magazine. But the voice had commanded and I was smart (some would say dumb) enough to comply.

The first thing I did was to think up six possible names for my magazine and run them by people I knew. One of those names was *Sedona Good Times*. Every time I mentioned that one, people would smile.

I had enough street smarts to know I didn't want to deal with generating and managing subscriptions. If this magazine were going to pay for itself and me, it would have to be through advertising. I began approaching people I knew—and people I didn't know—telling everyone my story. Even though I had no mockup to show them, a surprising number of these wonderful folks put money in my hand for ads... basically, I think, because I told them I believed I was following the voice of Spirit.

Three days later I thought I heard the voice again, telling me to approach the local copy shop about office space. That was a bit of a stretch. Had I gone completely over the edge? Maybe, but I steeled myself, put one foot in front of the other, and walked to Kwik Copy, where the owners provided me office space in return for a full-page ad on my back cover. They also offered me the use of their printer, which meant I could now print out the articles and ads I wrote and begin paste-up.

Next, a woman told me of a friend who was looking for someone to clean her house in return for free lodging. Now, one day a week, I washed windows and scrubbed floors. That only lasted a couple of months, but it was enough to get me started.

I slaved day and night (literally) on that first issue of *Sedona Good Times*. It was just me, and I changed hats a lot. Sedona was replete with fascinating people, and I interviewed them and wrote their stories. I sold and designed enough ads to feed myself and pay for printing 800 copies of Volume I, Issue I, then inputted everything into the computer, printed it out, cut out the pieces, and pasted them up. Finally, I arose early one morning and drove the two-and-a-half hours to Casa Grande.

The next day, I distributed the printed magazines to local stores. There it was, on the newsstand, sporting an original cover drawing by an artist friend. The interior looked pretty good, too, in spite of its hand paste-up job.

Exhausted, I went to bed and slept for three days. And then I awoke to a terrible truth: having no experience in the newspaper business, I had only sold ads for one issue. *I was going to have to start all over again!*

This time I would be *smarter*, though: I would sell three- and six-month contracts. Only trouble was, no one wanted to buy an ad. After three days with no results, I had to admit defeat. Those who had supported my first issue must have felt they had done their duty. They congratulated me on having carried through and published—something most of them had never really expected me to do—but they just couldn't see the practicality of buying an ad in another issue.

Discouraged, I did what any savvy Sedona resident would do: changed clothes, put on my hiking boots, and took off into the rocks. Somewhere on the trail to Long Canyon my frustration got the better of me, and I stopped, looked up, and railed at God. “You told me to do this!” I cried. “What am I supposed to do now?” I didn't really expect an answer, but I waited anyway. And one came. “What's the name of the magazine?” it thundered. “*Good Times!*” I roared back. *Aah*. Good times. Maybe I was supposed to be having a good time? “Okay,” I said. “Got it.”

At home I donned my party clothes and went out to socialize. For the next two weeks I focused on having a grand time, meeting new people and celebrating life. Each new acquaintance would eventually get around to

asking me what I did, and I'd tell them about *Sedona Good Times* and the voice of Spirit. "Oh yeah, I read that magazine," they would say. "It was pretty good." And they bought ads.

And so it went, year after year. Each month brought its challenges. Whenever I worried about finances, or the content of the magazine, or anything at all, the river stopped flowing. *Sedona Good Times* made sure I was given plenty of reminders that life and business only worked when I was having a good time.

When I remembered this incredible truth, miracles happened. Six months into the project, with thirty regular advertisers, I got the idea of throwing a party in a restaurant to thank them and their significant others. I had no funds for this, of course, but I cheerfully informed Spirit that I expected not only dinner but entertainment as well. That gave me a good chuckle. Well... one week later, the chef of one of the biggest restaurants in town introduced himself and informed me that he wanted to host a dinner for me and sixty people of my choosing. Really, he did. Picking my jaw up off the floor, I found the presence of mind to accept. All he wanted in return was a photo to publicize the work of my favorite (unabashedly gay) Native American fashion designer on

the front cover of *Sedona Good Times*. Done! It was quite a party and we had great fun shooting the cover photo.

*Sedona Good Times* supported me and those who eventually came to work with me, filling our lives with fun times, free restaurant meals and tickets to plays, music festivals, and adventures of all kinds. Still, being a publisher never had been my dream, and several times I tried to sell the magazine. At last I reached the point where I knew I could not ride this monthly merry-go-round one more time. Finally, at the last possible moment, Spirit offered an unexpected solution that enabled me to leave the magazine in good hands with all my financial and emotional needs met.

The *Smartest Thing* I ever did was to listen to my inner voice and follow its dictates—every one of them, no matter how ridiculous they sounded to me. In so doing, I learned three priceless lessons:

*First:* When you trust your inner voice (and it doesn't have to be one you actually hear—just follow your heart), the Universe will provide beyond your wildest dreams.

*Second:* If you're having a good time, everyone wants to be part of it—so when things aren't going well, stop struggling and go out and enjoy yourself. Then sit back and watch the miracles happen.

*Third:* If you don't learn your lessons the first time around (and who does?) life will provide ongoing opportunities to “get it.”

### **About the Author**

Chiwah Carol Slater, M.A. ([www.wordweaver4u.com](http://www.wordweaver4u.com)) is a linguist and professional ghostwriter, editor, and book coach with an eclectic array of titles to her credit. Her book, *Elationship: Love, Sex, and the Playful Spirit*, offers savvy insights for sharing a life infused with Spirit, and her monthly column in *The Light Connection* (San Diego) enjoys rave reader reviews. She is particularly talented at creating Internet sales letters, has hosted a radio talk show, and has led countless workshops exploring diverse spiritual traditions, awakening latent potential, and fostering positive self-expression. She lives in Oceanside, CA, and loves her son, Matt, beyond measure.