

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

American dreams still alive in economic hardships

Do you remember when you were a child and no dream seemed too big? Some of us thought we would become a fire fighter or an astronaut who would one day walk on the moon, while others imagined stepping up to the plate in the ninth inning of the seventh game of a World Series and knocking in the winning run. I remember dreaming of riding alongside Roy Rogers and Trigger, chasing the bad guys.

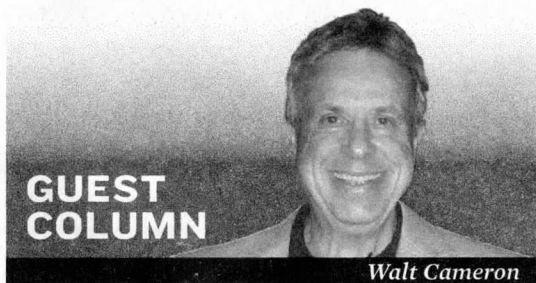
In fact, I'm sure that every one of us, when we were young, had this very important character trait in common. We were all big dreamers and, as we grew up, our dream evolved into pursuing our very own American dream.

Ah, yes, the American dream! The term was first used by economist James Truslow Adams in his book, "The Epic of America," written in 1931. Adams believed it was "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to their ability or achievement."

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Some of us believe the idea of an American dream is older than our country, dating back to

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1607, with the establishment of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the colony of Virginia. Others go back to 1620, when the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock in present day Massachusetts to escape religious persecution in England. They wanted to be free to worship God in their own way.

After the Pilgrims, people from other European countries began to have hope the dreams they could not achieve in their own homeland might be possible in a land far away called North America.

Now, I think we all understand the American dream means something different for everyone. Some would say it's the right to freedom or the

pursuit of happiness. Others would say it's the ability to work hard and get paid according to your ability and the results you achieve.

Many believe homeownership defines the phrase; others in owning their own business; and still others in the opportunity to achieve financial independence for their family. Whatever the definition of your own dream, I can promise you the American dream is not dead. In fact, it's very much alive today, even in these tough economic times we are all facing.

I believe the American dream was born with our Declaration of Independence, and it was established with our Constitution. Yes, it has survived for more than 237 years, even in the worst of times. I want to share with you why, even in these difficult economic times, Americans and immigrants alike still believe that a good life can be made through a clearly defined goal, hard work and good-old fashioned American ingenuity.

As a result of centuries of wonderful, inspiring and heartfelt stories from our Founding Fathers to Americans today, we are a country born of dreams. Those dreams simply will not die.

Walt Cameron of American Financial Educators is a 30-year financial consultant and inspirational speaker. He recently released the e-book, "Yes! The American Dream is Alive and Well." He can be reached at walt@americanfinancialeducators.com.