

Face your fears and conquer them

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Allow me to digress from traditional local subject matters on which I opine. With indulgence from my Triplicate editors, I appreciate your allowing me to proceed with a very different kind of topic this week: Facing and overcoming your fears.

Many of you may be aware Angela and I have been traveling across America these past three months. Our DuraMax 2500 GMC diesel truck has reliably been pulling our “home,” a 30-foot fifth wheel from Crescent City to points east, coast to coast and back to Del Norte County. The experience of traveling across the United States has been exhilarating, incredible and quite candidly, oft-times intimidating. Indeed, we’ve experienced our share of challenges mechanically and by extension, emotionally.

It’s harrowing to unexpectedly run over a piece of tire debris on I-40 east of Asheville, North Carolina and suddenly realize you’ve blown a tire on your RV. Incidents like this do happen and we’ve experienced a few “dramatic moments” on this trip of our lifetime.

The above experience taught me to confront my anxiety and control it. After the blowout, AAA help came within a short time and we were on our way. Things just worked out; they always do.

Many of you have aspirations to be more than who you are, not that there's anything wrong or deficient with your present self. Squaring off on your fears and vanquishing them is absolutely euphoric. Maybe you might initially be unsuccessful but there's usually someone there to help you up and fight off a fear. There's nothing like acknowledging your insecurities and prevailing.

In 2012, some local folks in Crescent City took notice and asked me to run for District 1 Board of Supervisors. I was a newcomer to Del Norte County and a staunch Tea Party conservative. Some folks heard some of my views and read my Letters to the Editor and suggested I consider running for office. My retort: "Me? I've never run for office. Never!"

I concealed the flattery of being asked to enter the blood sport of politics. The thought that some local citizens thought highly enough of me was more than admirable. The prospect of sharing my opinion and then having some people call me disparaging names just because my viewpoint wasn't their viewpoint, was a little daunting. I contained my butterflies, filed papers, campaigned passionately door-to-door and won my four elections (two primaries and two general elections) with a few cat calls of criticism and spicy, pejorative names. I quashed my fears, despite resting on the receiving side of some good ol fashion (and unsuccessful) bullying. I persevered and prevailed. Refreshing.

Maybe running for local office isn't on your bucket list but perhaps you have dreams to be more than who you are. Delivering your public comments at a Crescent City Council or Del Norte County Board of Supervisors meeting is a very good example of facing your public speaking fear and managing it. Have a serious conversation with your inner self and make a commitment to face your deepest fears and break through that glass ceiling. Those who criticize you are spectators from the bleachers. They stand for nothing. You are exceptional.

Our present local and regional economy presents some wonderful and ample opportunities to step up and improve your professional career. The job market is extremely welcoming to hardworking, dedicated, focused applicants. Reach out and step up. Now is a great time to improve your status.

There's no shortage of calls asking me to address a specific government problem, like the decades-long-standing, ramshackle eyesore medical building at 200 A St. I ask the individual who seeks my assistance, "Why don't you call your elected representative and share your complaint?" The response is always predictable:

"I can't do that. I'll be criticized. You do it. You're better at this than me." Thanks for the compliment but me doing the heavy lifting and complaining to a city, county, state or federal elected/bureaucrat unfortunately becomes very old, very quickly. There's nothing more powerful than a fresh voice expressing one's opinion. Face your fear and conquer it.

I share a healthy fear and anxiety of heights; it's called Acrophobia. I've learned I have a mild case of this condition; it freezes me when I observe Angie standing along the railing at the North Rim of the majestic Grand Canyon, looking down 9,000 feet into a geological abyss. I become weak-in-the-knees, like jelly, watching anyone standing on the edge of peril.

I'm happy to report, with Angie's help, I painfully, agonizingly, meter by meter, approached the precipice of that railing, and stared down my fear of heights. It wasn't easy but am proud to say I did it.

Folks, you have incredible power by speaking out on issues on which you are quietly passionate.

If you fear someone will criticize you for expressing your opinion, filing a complaint, demanding a change from our oft-times hard-of-hearing, moribund elected, find your voice, face your fear and flatten it. It works and the results can be life-changing. As Nike says, "Just Do It." You can make a huge difference.

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