

No promises made, none broken

by Tom Martin

This is the time of year that I should begin failing my New Year's resolutions. That is, if I'd made any, which I haven't.

I've never been much of a New Year's resolutioner. I never understood why Jan. 1 is any better than, say, Sept. 17, March 11, or any other date, that isn't the first day of a new year, to begin the course of improving one's life.

Of course, this philosophy allows me to continue my bad habits over a technicality. But if I paid attention I might have noticed one of my biggest life victories came because of a resolution at a milestone.

It was my 40th birthday when I stopped smoking. It seems like a great gift to myself now, but there wasn't much joy at the time.

In my life, I'd smoked, then quit, then smoked again. When I got married, my wife began a constant campaign to get me to stop. Some might call it nagging, others might call it love. I'll just call it consistent.

Finally, I made a deal with her. I told her I'd stop smoking when I turned 40 if she would stop complaining about my smoking. At the time, I was just trying to buy a reprieve - you know, receive now and pay later. But when that birthday came, I pitched the butts and haven't smoked since.

So what does my ability to keep that single resolution mean? It could mean that there was only one window in my life for resolutions, and it opened for my 40th birthday and closed shortly thereafter. Or, it could mean that the only resolutions I can keep are the ones forced upon me by love. Or, it could mean that these days I'm simply out of resolve.

It's not that I couldn't make some improvements to my life, like losing weight. If I keep growing physically at this pace, they're going to have to use roadside scales to weigh me.

Turns out I'm like a lot of people.

At myGoals.com, the largest number of 2007 goals (27 percent) fall into the health and fitness category.

Of the health and fitness goals, nearly 50 percent are to lose weight.

The next most popular goals are financial goals and those of the personal growth variety.

Strangely, the number of time management and organization goals dropped from 13 percent in 2005 to 6 percent in 2007.

My wife has perpetual organization goals. She feels better about herself amid order. And even if she can't see the disorder, it still bothers her. Out of sight, but still in mind.

If the messy bedroom is bothering her, I advise her to close her eyes. I've often thought maybe technology would allow the creation of a pair of goggles that would make everything appear clean and orderly even when it's not. Think of what a boost to the lazy this could provide.

But as it is, messes can walk through walls like ghosts to find and haunt my wife. It might be a messy drawer or closet somewhere in the house taunting her at bedtime. I consider it a curse.

Yet, I have my own demons. One of them is my inability to declare a resolution. It's quite sad, actually.

Making resolutions will inevitably result in me failing to keep them, so to feel better about myself, I don't make resolutions. In other words, it's better to not try than to try and fail - not exactly a motto for the ages.

But then again, I'm not the one who's welshing on a resolution.

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