

Three Cs

Courage, Conviction, and Confidence in one's own judgment and abilities, essential ingredients for success in any undertaking. Sadly, these traits are underdeveloped in far too many of us.

Whenever I hear someone state that they "feel" instead of stating that they believe or think, or want, or hope for, or anything other than that they "feel," I automatically conclude that there is no conviction, no confidence, and in all probability, no courage. Courage, conviction and confidence define a strength of character. Absent these, there is no strength of character, and that to me is a sad thing. Even more sadly, these traits in our modern-day school system are systematically suppressed. Not so, teachers will shout; yes so, I will affirm, because every time a student is asked how he or she feels about a topic, any kind of topic, conviction is suppressed. How convincing would our founding fathers have been had they said to the British "We feel these truths are self-evident"? It doesn't sound quite the same as "We hold these truths to be self-evident."

When I was commanding officer of a Navy meteorology and oceanography center I was often presented with a draft of correspondence on some subject or other, correspondence often drafted in response to a query. I was in place only a few days when a letter was set before me with the words "We feel . . ." I summonsed the quivering junior officer who drafted that prose and I still recall the words I said to him, quite uncomplimentary, and not suitable for inclusion herein, but the gist of it was "George, we do not feel. We believe, we think, we will, but we will never ever in this command, over my signature, **feel** about anything." I never ever again was presented with correspondence containing that sickly verbiage.

The saga does not end there. The man who formerly was my favorite TV news anchor was conducting an interview with some dignitary on some long-forgotten subject. What is not forgotten was the TV news anchor asked the man what he **feels** we should do about this now forgotten problem. I somehow suppressed the urge to hurl my shoe at the TV, but, sadly, the news anchor went from idol to dolt in an instant and I have never regained my former esteem of him. I simply have an unfavorable opinion of anyone who feels instead of believing or thinking. I have been roundly criticized for stating my beliefs, but I believe that liberals, or progressives, as they like to be called now, are far more likely to "feel" about things than are conservatives, who actually have convictions and fearlessly state them. If you do not believe this statement, I urge you to pay close attention when politicians are spouting off about anything.

An area that perhaps best exemplifies a lack of courage, conviction and confidence in one's own judgment and abilities is one that is near and dear to me – the television weather soothsayers. I sometimes wonder if they are actually meteorologists or if they are simply presented with some words and charts to discuss. Have you ever heard one of them say "This is what I believe is going to happen"? I haven't either. The usual thing is "The model shows;" never a solid statement of conviction. That may be because they will then be able to use the model for their scapegoat when things do not work out. We all know that weather is a fickle mistress and often difficult to pin down. That is as it should be. I just wish the TV personalities would accept the fact that it is better to be specifically wrong than to be vaguely right. After all, what have I told you when I forecast "possible widely scattered showers" What that tells me is that the forecaster doesn't know what the hell is going to happen and doesn't have the intestinal fortitude to say so. It is what we in the trade call a CYA forecast. By the way, I never use that kind of language, but I have heard the expression used on news broadcasts so I guess it is somewhat acceptable. Those type forecasts are not acceptable, and a Navy meteorologist on an aircraft carrier would be thrown off the bridge if he or she engaged in forecasts that carry no confidence, no conviction, and no courage, courage to accept being wrong instead of vaguely right.

And now that you know what the Three Cs are as defined by Frenchy, you can put on your judge's robes and join me in listening for those who feel instead of thinking.

Extraordinary Times

Life goes on, but not in the same manner as that to which we have become accustomed. Social Distancing – who ever heard of that before a few days ago? Although it has been practiced on Navy ships since time immemorial where an environment exists which precludes, nay forbids, intimate contact. In an all-male crew, casually touching a shipmate can raise more than eyebrows, and those who engaged in such touching were quickly sent back to civilian life. The Navy made no effort to be politically correct and anyone found to be other than heterosexual was summarily discharged. And now, not only on Navy ships but in the world at large, we are practicing social distancing.

The pedestrian lanes are not crowded between 0530 and 0715 and that part of my life remains unchanged. Duck doesn't even know there is a problem. Other parts of my life experience the new atmosphere that surround all of us. I baked some sourdough hot cross buns last week, enough for our needs with a surplus to share with some deserving neighbors. The neighbors would typically be invited inside, chat for a while, exchange hugs, and depart with their wares. Not this time. They stayed on the porch, took the hand-out of buns, thanked me, and left without further ado. Another neighbor for whom we had collected mail while they played snow bird and went on a warm water cruise, upon arriving home did not come for their mail, but rather requested I put it in a bag and leave it on their front porch. Social long-distancing. Barbara was relieved that it went down that way because she in particular is in the "high risk" category, age 87 with congestive heart failure, and wants to keep a wide berth from anyone who has been on a cruise ship. Who can blame her?

With snow flying along on a stiff cold wind last Friday, I opted to motor over to the credit union in my truck rather than take my ATV. The doors were locked and my only option for getting a check converted into something spendable was to use the drive-up window. That is something I never do, not at Dairy Queen and certainly not at the credit union. My truck window is inconveniently higher off the ground than are the drive-up windows, so I park and walk inside. Not that day. Next stop was City Hall, to renew my ATV license, pay the quarterly water/sewer assessment, and apply for an absentee voting ballot. A drop box has been set outside the building for utility payments but a clerk took my money for the ATV license and gave me the application forms for absentee ballots, which I can drop in a box after the forms are completed. The Brillion Fire Chief, a casual friend of several years, bumped elbows with me when we met in the lobby of city hall. No customary handshake.

I was advised Saturday evening that the production of maple syrup had been terminated for the season. Since it is pretty easy to remain socially distant while sitting in front of the fire box of the evaporator, I have no ready explanation for how this came about. I had been scheduled to fire up the evaporator a few days of last week for the benefit (edification) of school children but when the schools closed their doors, that little task went out the window. However, with sap on hand and more in the trees, syrup production could have gone on. I have to believe that somebody has a really good reason for the stoppage, but walking through the sugar bush this morning was an eerie experience, eerily silent, with no shiny buckets hanging on the boles of the maple trees and no steam rising above the evaporator. The setting evoked thoughts of an empty tomb. The silence was briefly broken by the call of a mourning dove, but that was it.

I noticed my 8-Lb splitting maul that I had loaned to the operators, to reduce that occasional too-large piece of wood into a size suitable for the firebox, leaning against a wall. I thought that if I carry it home, I won't have to return for it later. After all, even with the fiberglass handle, it can't weigh much more than 9 Lbs, only a few ounces heavier than most of my rifles, and I was only 1.7 miles from home, a distance over which I have carried many a rifle on countless occasions. I learned that a splitting maul is less comfortable to tote than is a rifle with a sling attached, and by the time I reached home the maul weighed something over 14 Lbs, I am sure.

Life as we know it is not the same, but life goes on. For my part, I am not fearful, but I am cautious and I hope to be vigilant. This is an insidious invisible foe which has set upon us and sadly, it will kill some, but not all, of us. To be reckless is tantamount to being stupid. We can take every precaution available and still be stricken, but to take no precautions increases the odds that one will be stricken. I have lived a long and fruitful life but I am not ready to concede that I have lived long enough; with that in mind, I will exercise social distancing, hand washing, and all else in the tool box available to me. Not last and certainly not least, I will trust that the same loving God who looked after me yesterday will be with me all day today and again tomorrow. If He gets spread too thin, He sends in an angel to ride on my right shoulder. He's there now...

Freedom Is Not Free
Frenchy Sends with Warm Regards

Submitted by R. Claude "Frenchy" Corbelle, USN RET