

Floating along

Last month brought a news story about an Oregon man who flew from Oregon to Idaho while sitting on a lawn chair held aloft by a bunch of balloons. With ballast he could empty and a pellet gun to shoot balloons, he was able to drift along until he achieved his goal – somewhere in Idaho.

His was an odd sort of quest – and there are few of us who would ever think of trying it.

And yet each day, many of us float along, just as he did, driven by the winds of chance, until we reach some destination where we finally set down – or die trying.

Contrast this story with the pilot of an airliner, with a flight plan, engines, flaps and a rudder.

Or more importantly, contrast this story with that of the captain of a tall-masted sailing ship.

I'm not a sailor, and the sailors among you will no doubt recognize that. But while in olden times, sailing ships could only run in the direction of the wind, the mariners who sailed the world knew they could, through the angling of and deployment of sails, sail with or against the wind.

These mariners knew how to harness the winds that blew around them – and as a result, were able to control their course, even though they may not have been able to control their speed as much as they would have liked.

In our lives, many of us are blown along through life, just like the man with the balloons. Rather than choosing to make our own destination, we allow ourselves to be driven to and fro. Occasionally, we may wind up in a great spot – but much of the time – probably most of the time -- we wind up somewhere we never wanted to wind up.

If it seems like your life is out of control, it might be because you don't have a clear destination. If you feel like you're being buffeted along on the winds of chance, it's likely that you are – and you need to learn from the mariners who went before you – even if you've got high winds, you can harness those winds for your own benefit.

Let's remember the four rules of getting where you want to go:

1. Determine your destination.
2. Decide how you're going to get there.
3. Start on your journey.
4. Continue until you reach your destination, even if you need to make course adjustments as you go along.

To tell you the truth, I admire the guy for getting up in that lawn chair, and leaving it all to the winds. Obviously, he studied the prevailing wind pattern before selecting his starting point – he didn't leave it all to chance. Earlier attempts had taught him to plan ahead, so he made plans to ascend and descend successfully. It took a lot of guts – that's for sure.

But if we wish to move through life, we're going to do a lot better if we use the forces around us to our advantage. We're going to do a whole lot better still if we have a destination and a plan to reach it – and then keep on our path until we achieve our final goal.

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