

NEVER GIVE UP

Proposition 46 saves lives and helps get justice for your neighbors, clients and fellow citizens. Tell everyone you know, and people you don't know, about it. Many of our members have stepped up and donated so that we can get the message out to voters for the November elections. Some of our members haven't donated and have come up with many excuses. The one I like the best is "I don't want to contribute because I am afraid we are going to lose." Really! Is that a legitimate excuse?

I recently read Colin Powell's book on life and leadership. He recalled speaking at a private high school in Japan. After his speech, the students were invited up to the microphone to ask questions. After a few minutes, he quickly realized that the teacher had designated only honor roll kids who were reading from pre-printed cards that had questions which were pre-screened by the teacher.

He decided to break up the pattern and pointed to some students who were sitting in the very back of the class (where he would have been sitting when he was a teenager). One girl, about 13-14 years old, raised her hand and General Powell called on her. "Are you ever afraid?" she asked. He responded "I am afraid every day." She continued, "I am afraid to fail." What a brave question!

General Powell responded by saying "I am afraid of something every day and I fail at something every day." He went on to state "fear and failure are always present. Accept them as part of life and learn how to manage these realities."

The room went completely silent. Every one of those high achieving kids had the same question in their mind but were too scared to ask it in front of their peers.

General Powell concluded by saying "if and when you fail, fix the causes and keep moving forward."

As trial lawyers, we always hear and read about the big verdict and the amazing result on the seemingly impossible case. But rarely do trial lawyers ever talk about our fear of failure .. our fear of losing!

Every trial lawyer I know has lost a case. When we lose, it hurts badly and usually our clients are devastated. But, they had their day in Court and usually after some time passes, they move on. You must move on too! Never let the fear of failure paralyze you in your practice or your life.

Learn from it, fix it, if you can. But move on and continue fighting.

Recently, Stuart Scott gave a speech at the ESPYS after receiving the Jimmy Valvano Award. The speech was so powerful I was moved to tears watching it. Mr. Scott made reference to Jim Valvano's seven words – "Don't give up, don't ever give up." He then went on to offer some of the most insightful points about life I have ever heard. He said in reference to cancer that "dying doesn't mean you lost to cancer .. winning is how you lived when you know you are going to die." Wow! What a statement to live by.

One of my all-time favorite movies is a film called "The Last Samurai." It involves the story of a washed-up Army Captain who fought against the Native American warriors under General Custer. He had spiraled into alcohol and depression until he was hired by a Japanese Emperor to come to Japan and teach the Japanese Imperial Army how to fight western style against the traditional Samurai tribal warriors.

Ultimately, Captain Algren (Tom Cruise) was captured by the Samurai and although held captive, began to learn about the importance of a life worth living. There was a huge battle and, in the end, the Samurai leader (Katsumoto) died on the battlefield next to Cruise (who survived).

The Young Emperor of Japan was very distraught at the death of the Samurai leader because he knew the whole Country had lost a spiritual leader. The Emperor summoned Captain Algren to the Palace and asked him if he was with the Samurai leader when he died. He was told "yes he was." He asked Captain Algren if he could tell him how he died. Captain Algren responded "no, let me tell you something more important .. let me tell you how he lived!"

When you look back at your career as a trial lawyer and someone asks you about your career, be proud to tell them "how you lived" as a lawyer who represented real people ... how you made a difference in real peoples' lives ... how you donated to help schools, teams and how you helped find social justice for families whose loved ones were injured or killed due to the negligence of another.

Be sure to write your story about how you fought for justice and never be afraid to fail!