

Commentary: Keep Your Radar Turned On

-Michael H. Samuelson

I find metaphor and simile to be very efficient ways to advance a story line or drive home a main theme or point. In my writing and public speaking, I often draw from several life experiences and observations to enhance the theme of CHANGE and the importance of paying attention in life.

For instance, let's take a look at radar. Back during the Vietnam War era, I was a young airman stationed at a radar listening post on the top of an extinct volcano in the middle of Alaska. The purpose of radar is to allow you to detect and track incoming objects as early as possible. This allows you to determine the degree of threat and, if needed, take appropriate defensive or offensive action.

Think of radar in your own life, if you are like most people, you often sense threat but delay taking action because:

- You tell yourself that you are too busy
- You hope that somebody else will deal with the problem
- You convince yourself that the problem doesn't really exist

Then, as the "blips of life" get closer and new ones appear on the horizon, your anxiety increases as you continue to convince yourself that you are really too busy. You continue the delusion that someone else will take care of the mounting issues, and you hold on to the notion that the issues aren't that bad or that they don't exist, at all.

Then, one day comes and you look up at the sky to find that the sun is totally obliterated by threatening blips—work, health, family concerns, relationships, money—and then, what do you say? Well, all too often we express surprise and shock as we tell everyone and ourselves "I didn't see THAT coming!" Of course, you did. You saw it way out on the outer circle of your radar as you told yourself that you were too busy, you hoped and expected that somebody else would deal with the issue, and you convinced yourself that it really wasn't a big deal and that it maybe wasn't a problem, at all.

During the short time you'll spend reading this I know from years of experience that your personal and professional radar will turn on, do a 360-degree sweep, and life's blips will once again appear. You have options. You can:

- Immediately shut down the radar and move into complete denial until forced into a panic stricken reactive mode
- You can tell yourself that you are too busy
- You can wait for someone else to fix the concerns
- You can minimize and/or deny the existence of the problems

- You can focus energy on the threats and take proactive measures to protect you, your family, and your co-workers from the threat

The choice is yours. By the way, one of the benefits of keeping your radar turned on is that you will never again be a victim.

Now, as I have spoken about before, what was really happening in Alaska was that every Tuesday morning around 2:00 a.m. the klaxons would go off and somebody would shout, “The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming!” as we detected Russian bombers entering Alaskan airspace. We would then notify the Alaskan Air Command in Anchorage and they would scramble F-102 fighter jets to chase the Russians back home. The next night, some young kid who looked like me but spoke Russian would yell, “The Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming!” as we sent B-52s into their airspace until Russian MiG fighter jets would intercept and escort them back to Alaska.

This cat and mouse game seemed silly until you realized that people in Seattle didn’t realize what was happening, nor did people in Chicago, Des Moines, Baton Rouge, or Providence. They didn’t need to know because somebody was paying attention; somebody was on guard so that everyone else could rest easy and safely go about their business.

Can you imagine if instead of watching for incoming blips and proactively responding to potential threats, we decided that we had a hot pinochle game going so we turned off our scope figuring that Yukon, Anchorage, or Seattle would eventually pick up any real threats? Of course, that would have been crazy and disastrous thinking. However, we constantly do this in our personal and professional lives.

It’s your choice. My advice: **Turn on your personal radar...and keep it turned on!**