

MCCONIGA'S AXIOMS: *THEY AREN'T MY CLOWNS & THIS ISN'T MY CIRCUS*

-Greg McConiga, Executive Technical Editor

I don't know about you, but I'm fed up with political correctness, partial truths, and our lack of courage to face absolutes. There are absolutes in life -- in the character and nature of man, in our capacity to hear, learn and understand -- and they are revealed in what we see in the world around us. People can say anything, but their intentions become clear when you see what they do. Talk is cheap; actions reveal the man -- and more often than not you're likely to be disappointed in what you'll see.

Over the years I've written down a list of axioms, things that have proved to be universally true for me, 100% of the time. Things that apply to people, places, businesses, and events, and today I thought I'd share a few of these with you. The list is under constant revision and the delicate among you may find my opinions a bit strong. You are free to disagree and I don't care if you exercise that option as I will not attempt to change your mind. And you'll extend the same courtesy to me, okay? Not all are original; I'm not nearly that bright. Some you'll recognize as old truisms reworded, some a variation on previously-expressed thoughts, and some are all mine. In no particular order, we begin:

#48 *The good old days weren't always that good.*

From civil rights to quality of life to entertainment options to health care we've



made great strides in America. We have more quality and more options than ever before.

One of the things I do is work in a restoration shop and I can tell you this with complete authority: Those old cars can't compare to what we drive today. Don't get me wrong. I love the old muscle car era. From 1960 until 1972 or so, we built some beautiful cars -- sexy, curvy, loud, and powerful. But when it comes to build quality, overall performance, and reliability the old cars don't hold a candle to what we drive today. Some progress is good progress (powertrains and reliability), and some progress is bad progress (cookie cutter bodies and flat, formless body panels). What I'd like to have is a sexy old car with all modern running gear, electronics, and brakes. Now that would be good progress...

#36 *Your thoughts control your actions and your actions control your environment. You can't change your surroundings until you change your dominant patterns of thought.*

From the autonomic to the autonomous, brain activity or thought processes control our biological self. If you can't do the skull work, if you can't control your thoughts and beliefs, you can't control your physical output. Whatever you think about is monitored by your subconscious and becomes the set of filters through which you see the world. If you're an "I can't; I won't; I don't know how" person, then all you'll see are obstacles or ways to fail. If you're an "I can; I will; I'll find out how" kind of person, then you'll find a way to overcome just about any obstacle in your path as you drive toward success. Psychologists studying human behavior refer to "learned helplessness" (if you feel that you have no control, you give up and accept whatever situation you find yourself in), and "confirmation bias" (you only hear or see that which is in accord with your pre-existing beliefs) to explain some of the same effect.

How does this apply to our trade? Success begins with self-talk and that self-talk has to be in the affirmative. People talk themselves into and out of success at hundreds of points during the day. If you're involved in a first time build, or if you're managing a huge last-nut-and-bolt frame-off restoration, your self-talk and your internal mental moving picture must remain positive to get a positive result. You can't think left and head right; your skull work must be consistent with your desired outcome.

#24 *If it's not worth doing with 100% effort don't do it at all.*

You only get so many heartbeats and so many days. Don't spend your time doing things that don't fulfill you. You'll find that you will spend the same number of hours at work or engaged in your passion each day. Why make those hours anything other

than full and complete? If you find yourself at work 10 hours, then fill those ten hours with all the effort you can muster. Don't spend a second being mediocre. If you're going to do it, give it everything you've got.

Finally, I'll leave you with the first six axioms I wrote down many years ago that pertain to what people will and will not do when confronted with new information that isn't in accord with what they think they already know and believe. We humans are incredibly adept at justifying what we think we know and we are equally adept at lying to ourselves about what constitutes acceptable behaviors. In spite of what several of the younger generations seem to believe, we don't ride this rock alone. So, learning how others think (or don't think) is key to mutual accountability and responsibility.

In one form or another, I think you'll find that all of the following apply to our lives, our families, our trade, and our business, either from employee-to-employee, or from business-to-customer. Give it a little thought and tell me what you think:

- #1** You cannot teach those who will not learn.
- #2** You cannot help those who will not be helped.
- #3** You cannot convince those who will not be convinced.
- #4** You cannot disprove a belief or an opinion.
- #5** There is nothing that you can say or do that will have any effect on the chronically undereducated, the lazy, the stupid or the crazy.
- #6** Some things are true even when you choose not to believe them; other things aren't true even when you choose to believe them. ■