

# LEARNING THE LESSON OF THE PANDA

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I just returned from three self designed whirlwind weekend jaunts; the “Stateline Nevada Community Chest Victory Tour” (theirs not mine), the “Four Idiot’s Snowmobile Donner Summit-Reno Fun Train Boondoggle”, and “You’re in the Cage Now” tours of San Diego Wild Animal Park and Zoo. Despite a nasty virus in San Diego making me cough with such vigor NASA wanted my launch codes, I trudged on doing my best Sam Elliot voice and Walter Brennan shoe shuffling slide.

In Tahoe, front row reserved seats became Mystery Alaska tundra. They swore their undying love, they lied and then played hide the peanut with a courtesy credit. No team work

On the Reno train, we sang with strolling troubadours, grooved to a smooth piano tinkling club car Caruso and loosed our caboose in the dance car. It was sobering to see one man struggle down a swaying rail car en route to the restroom. Not one lent a hand. He had multiple sclerosis. His wife was long drunk and distanced herself from their shared reality. No team work.

In San Diego, after unapologetic branding and a cattle call loading and landing, we limped back to the car rental agency after a prior one hour wait. The rental and Madame P were competing in volume and wild threatening spasms as to what was more dangerous, the car or her if I did not pull over, let her out and shoot the quivering beast. Thank you, Team Fox car rental

Returning from Tahoe, a sure fire head on collision did not occur as everyone did the right thing. On Donner Summit, we were one adrenalin pumping, blizzard braving bunch, tying our rumps to 500 cc’s of gas powered, icicle-enema in every orifice machines, boxing with God and ogling a winter wonderland. The final weekend at the Zoo, the human camaraderie was best. The affectionate tease, the slightly slower pace and the gratitude told me that although I was an idiot to travel when ill, I was their idiot. They loved the adventures and were watching over me. All of it, teamwork. Also in San Diego, we learned of male Pandas peeing during tree limb handstands just for a three day a year wink from lady love and then after; alone.

Recently, the Vice Mayor, Community Services and City Management asked me to revisit a great joy; team building. The hope is that folks will come together in tight budget times to build a sustainable community arts program better than before. There might be team work.

Teamwork lights fires and stokes dying embers among its members. The gleam of growing teams is not burning so brightly from Lady Liberty these past few decades and I fear the darkness. Emphasis on super star athletes, addictive technocracy and mass media adoringly chanting at the shrine of the perpendicular pronoun, “I”, prevent greatness. First fruits of our disinterest in creative team building abound, whether symbolized by a syringe in the butt of some uber athlete or rapidly rotating rehab doors. Team work; one of the first things we complain about when it’s missing and for many; the farthest solution from their minds

Teams thrive on diversity and complementary skills when unified in purpose. Margaret Mead mused, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.”

No singular accomplishment which has indelibly propelled the species forward on this mortal coil occurred in a vacuum. When last did you hear a conductor and only see a symphony? Every one of Michael Jordan’s amazing acts of athleticism was not preceded by God giving him the ball. Team work is a bank of withdrawn self interest, deposited fears and compounded earnings based on the faith and full credit that common people can attain uncommon results.

So the next time a call comes your way for a glorious invitation, a chance to build and thrive on a team, consider the peeing Panda-and for what; three days and adios?

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