

Written by By Greg McNeil
Friday, 06 January 2017 12:10



There have been many full moons since I was a little boy but I recall a time when I overheard an intense conversation between my mother and her older brother Charles, my favorite but scary uncle. Uncle Charles was a hard man who worked construction, the tough sort of man who knew his way around the world but didn't take kindly to others suggesting that he change the way he lived his life.

It was rare for me to ever hear or see my mother cry. I was instantly afraid. After the door slammed shut I eased out to the kitchen where my mother sat with tears in her eyes. She told me that my uncle was very sick. Today I would describe his sickness as "comorbidity," that is having two or more chronic diseases happening at the same time. My uncle was diagnosed with both lung cancer and diabetes from a life of smoking and poor eating habits. "Why doesn't he c
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I asked" and my mother replied "some people are set in their ways."

I didn't know it at the time but the phrase "some people are set in their ways" would stick with me and eventually have a hand in directing my career. When I think back to my Uncle Charles he was an iron man to me but as I matured I realize that as tough as he was, he and the type of people I had associated with being tough as nails, the iron men and women in our families and society were actually in danger. You see iron, which is a natural element has extraordinary uses but in its natural state iron can be very difficult to work with because it is basically a hard rock without much give or promise.

Over the years that iron rock or those "who were set in their ways" came to represent the

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individuals with little or no flexibility. This is not to say that people should not stand for what they believe in or change course every time the wind blows, but instead recognize that every life is contained within the seasons of change. The body is never the same, as it changes year by year and moment by moment. If you cook at all you probably have a cast iron skillet stashed away somewhere, but once that cast iron skillet cracks it can never be put back together. The same is true of people.

As we move forward in life we learn to respect the needs and rights of others, but for those set in their ways we can offer them an alternative – *steel*. Steel is an alloy and is stronger than iron. Steel in the form of health is the alloy we offer those we love, not to change them but to introduce elements into their lives that support the internal strength and fortitude they already have.

Coach G

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