Of a certain age...

By Diane Goble

Columnist

In the U.S., 160,000 children miss school every day out of fear of being bullied, and almost half of all students say they have experienced bullying. I can remember being physically sick many mornings before going to elementary school for fear of being bullied. It stayed with me through high school. It affected me in my work life.

I still experience anticipatory anxiety in certain situations, but, at least now, I recognize it — do some deep breathing and put it into perspective.

I had the opportunity to speak to a class at Sisters High School last year, and as I wandered down the hallways I was suddenly transported back to my own school experiences 50-plus years ago. All the times I was bullied by classmates and friends flashed through my mind. My worst memories, by far, come from my high school swim coach, who chastised, berated, humiliated, demeaned and threatened his athletes in every way possible to get us to perform, then punished us (100 laps) if we didn't beat our best time every meet. Winning was all he cared about. It was all about him and his reputation, not us. It still raises my hackles every time I hear about a youth sports coach overstepping the line.

Speaking of coaches, I recently came across an article that listed the highest-paid corporate CEOs in the U.S. and they are all

ex-college football coaches. Their bullying attitude trickles down the corporate culture. It comes out in the sales and marketing tactics, and the way employees are treated in the workplace. It's all about getting the sale, the contract, the money, the deal ... everything is monetized, not personalized.

These life-long bullies carry their kindergarten mentality through high school to college to career, into their marriages, and get themselves into positions of power where they think they have the right to mess with people's lives as if others are somehow less human, less deserving, less worthwhile as human beings. They think what they think is more right than what others think and they assume, if nobody stands up to them, that they get to make the rules for everybody else using bullying tactics, if necessary.

Little dictators are everywhere.

Inside they may be miserable, sad, unhappy people with early childhood tragedies unconsciously motivating them to seek revenge by doing unto others what was done to them, for which they should be seeking counseling, not revenge. Adult bullies were either bullies

as children or were bullied as children. Unfortunately they don't see themselves as being the common denominator in all the dramas they create as they shift their internalized anger onto others. They get that bewildered "who me?" look on their face when confronted.

There are the self-centered, narcissistic bullies who have no empathy with others and little anxiety about the consequences. In order to feel good about themselves, they have to put other people down. They are not interested in working things out; they are not interested in compromise. They are more interested in power and domination; they need to feel important and preferred.

I used to work for such a man, a wealthy philanthropist who schmoozed with the rich and famous of Hollywood, who gloated over reducing women to tears using as few words as possible. It didn't work on me, but his ex-wives, whom I had to comfort over the phone on an almost daily basis, kept coming back for more.

Verbal bullies can be quite damaging and difficult to document. These bullies may start rumors about their victims, talk about them behind their back, stop talking or whisper when they approach. They may use sarcastic or demeaning language to dominate or humiliate someone. Words don't leave visible scars, but the emotional and psychological impacts go deep and can result in reduced job performance and even depression.

They get away with it because they don't leave any marks with their passiveaggressive behavior and, if called out, would adamantly deny what observers can see so clearly. It's often an unconscious reaction on their part, but the wounds they inflict on others are deep nevertheless. And there is a ripple effect into the community that can take on a life of its own.

If you're "of a certain age" and still struggling with the scars of childhood bullying, get some counseling, take up meditation or yoga to release the negative energy.

Search YouTube and find videos that describe this behavior and how to defuse bullies. Sometimes they just need a hug —or to know their grievances have been heard.

Wedding hosts in Sisters dealt a setback

SISTERS (AP) —A couple that has tried for years to gain approval to host weddings on their 216-acre property near Sisters is no closer to doing so.

The Bend Bulletin reports the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) rejected a permit that allowed a twoacre private park on the property owned by John and Stephanie Shepard to be used for weddings and receptions.

The private park concept was approved by Deschutes County Commissioners in April, allowing the Shepherds to host up to 18 weddings from May to October.

But the county's decision was appealed to LUBA by Central Oregon LandWatch and a Bend attorney who said an approval would've set a precedent for wedding venues on land zoned exclusively for farm use.

John Shepherd said he plans to appeal LUBA's decision.

Mennick vs. Fracchia, et al

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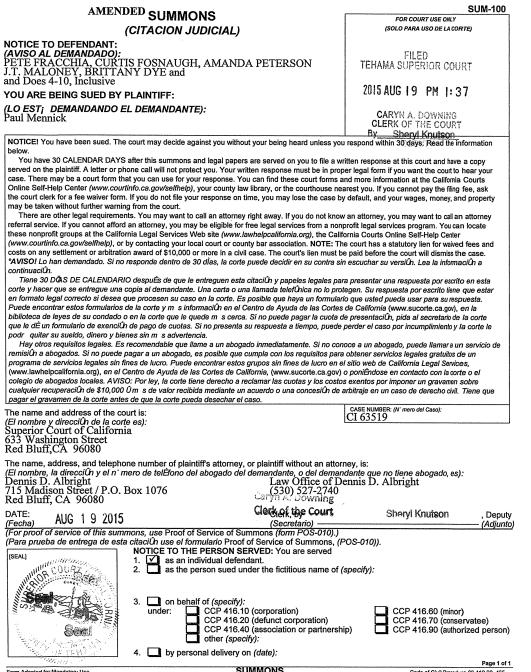


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