

**Of a certain age...**  
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# Living with *passion*

By Jim Cornelius | Editor in Chief

**“I’ve always lived life with passion,” says Erik Dolson.**

**The Sisters man, one-time publisher of *The Nugget Newspaper*, is a writer, an automobile racer, a sailor — and at age 70, he still feels the need for speed.**

Dolson has been racing a vintage Corvette with considerable success over the past 25 years. Over the Labor Day Weekend, Dolson was the recipient of the Zupans Markets Historic Races Pete Lovely Award, voted upon by the crews who work the races.

“This means much to me,” Dolson wrote in a reflection on the honor. “You who work the flag stations, the starting grid, the tow trucks ... you not only make racing possible, you see it all, for long hours in bitter cold or blistering heat, risking your own well-being to keep drivers safe, sometimes saving lives. Your recognition is something I value more than any checkered flag.”

Last year, Dolson was awarded the Wemme Trophy, a lifetime-achievement award recognizing significant contributions to Portland vintage racing.

Dolson took up racing at age 45 — and sailing at age 65. Is the drive toward pursuing new adventures later in life a choice or something innate? Hard to say.

“There are a lot of options,” Dolson told *The Nugget*. “One is to not do anything — by choice, I suppose. Take it easy. There are those, unfortunately, who *can’t* do what they used to do or want to do. I am incredibly fortunate that I am able to pursue passions that I’ve had for decades — and pick up some new ones.”

The passions may be innate, but the effort to pursue them takes deliberate effort.

“The conscious choice is when I go run the river trail two or three times a week, or I go to the gym three times a week to maximize my physical capabilities — or as I prefer to say — make the world a lighter place.”

In addition to maintaining physical health, there are advantages to age that enhance mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

“I am more grateful now — for so many things — than at almost any other time of my life,” Dolson said. “I think this comes with perspective, which comes with age. Gratitude displaces a lot of negativity, which can be so corrosive.”

A recently-acquired joy is riding an electric unicycle. The unit, which is steered off the rider’s balance, can achieve speeds of 35 miles per hour — which is quite a lot when there’s nothing separating the rider from the pavement. Dolson uses it to run into town from where his sailboat docks — and to simply enjoy himself.

Whenever the unicycle comes out, there are stares — and even friends can be a little aghast at what he gets up to.

“I occasionally get the rueful shake of the head,” he

acknowledged. “They’ve probably been shaking their head at me for the last 40 years. Acting my age has never been my strong suit.”

The septuagenarian can’t quibble with their judgment. “I don’t disagree with them,” he said with a wry laugh.

He noted that when he crashed on his unicycle a few months ago and injured his shoulder, “I wondered if I’d taken it a step too far. But the shoulder healed.”

And Dolson climbed back up on the wheel. He’s not planning on stopping. One of the advantages to taking up avocations that some might find outlandish when you’re past middle age is that you’re well past worrying about what others think about it.

“I’m there to feel the joy of balanced movement,” he said. “And it doesn’t matter if someone thinks I’m indulging in risky behavior.”

It’s not risk per se that drives Dolson. He noted that he gave up flying because he considered himself a mediocre pilot.

“And I thought that was a bad thing to be,” he said.

More than risk, Dolson is drawn to challenge — the challenge of pushing himself and a race car to the limits, or learning to sail, navigate, and maintain a sailboat as a way of life.

“There is joy in doing something well,” he said. “There is challenge in learning new skills and there’s satisfaction from meeting that challenge.”

And a fellow rider recently told him about a wheel that does 45 mph...

**Erik Dolson, 70-going-on-15, whipped around the parking lot at Fika Sisters Coffeehouse last week on his electric unicycle.**



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

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