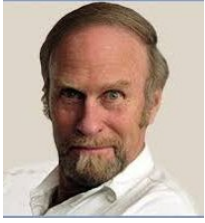


A Christmas Gift: You Can Do That



By Frosty Wooldridge

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Have you ever faced a situation that caused you to question yourself? Did you confront a teacher that you disliked or a fellow student who badgered you? Have you dwelt with co-workers that made you tear your hair out?

(Standing between two redwoods along the California coast that have been saying, “I can grow for 2,500 years and keep growing.”) Photograph by Frosty Wooldridge and ten second delay tripod.



Welcome to the human race!

When I grew up, my father gifted me with one of the most profound statements in my young life. I faced a science project at school that felt impossible, beyond my skills and over my head.

I grumbled, whined and complained.

“Dad, that science project feels like I have to fly to the moon with Tinkerbell’s wings,” I said. “It’s killing me.”

He said, “Son, I learned one thing on my winding road through this life: some people sit and watch while others take action, and take the lead. Most give applause, and cheer those who

take the lead. A few people take the lead.”

“Okay,” I said. “Where does that leave me?”

“You can complain about your situation,” he said, “but that doesn’t get you anywhere. You can make a lot of excuses, but that sets up failure. You can decide to take action. That will get you to your destination.”

“Yeah, but dad,” I said. “I can’t...”

“Son, this may be the most important advice I’ve ever shared with you,” my dad said. “There are two kinds of people in this world. The ones that say, ‘I can’t’ and the ones that say, ‘I can’. You get to decide. Once you make a decision, it will follow you the rest of your life. It will dominate your life-journey. It will give you a rich life or an average life. Do you understand?”

“Yes sir,” I said.

“Whenever you face a problem, task, challenge, test or anything that confronts you in life,” he said, “I want you to remember these words: ‘I can do that.’”

“Yes sir,” I said.

“Okay, repeat after me,” he said. “I can do that.”

I repeated, “I can do that.”

From that point to this day, I know in my heart, in my mind and in my spirit that, “I can do that.”

Ironically, in the 10th grade, I took world history from a wonderful teacher, Mrs. Barbara Rainwater. Halfway through the semester, we studied China. I saw a picture in the history book of the Great Wall of China.

“Someday,” I said, “I’m going to walk on the Great Wall of

China.”

Mrs. Rainwater gruffed, “You can’t walk on the Great Wall. It’s closed to all foreigners. You will never walk on the Great Wall of China.”

“My dad said things always change in the world,” I said. “I will be ready when China opens to the world.”

Years after I graduated from high school and after my college career was completed, China opened its gates to the world in 1984. I bought a one-way ticket around the world on an airplane. I bicycled through Europe. I backpacked into the Swiss Alps. I walked through the Vatican. I stood on the steps of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. I landed in Hong Kong. I pedaled, trained, hiked and worked my way to Beijing. From there, I pedaled my way north to the Ming Dynasty tombs.

Never in my life could I have imagined “The Summer Palace”; “Forbidden City”; “Ming Dynasty Tombs”; and “The Streets of Beijing”. I snapped hundreds of pictures.

But my one goal remained: **walk on the Great Wall of China.** Several days later, I labored up some hills and pushed myself to the limit. Finally, I stood at the steps of the Great Wall of China. A bunch of kids raced toward me to sell me a “Great Wall of China” T-shirt. I bought it for a few bucks. Within minutes, I climbed the steps and walked along the Great Wall of China. It’s nearly 4,000 miles long. It’s huge. It’s thousands of years old. Millions of Chinamen died building it to keep out the northern invaders.

I set up the tripod to take a picture. To this day, my proudest moment remains the day that I walked on the Great Wall of China. Not only that, my “Adventure Wall” shows me bicycling in Antarctica, Australia, South America, Europe and all of Asia. I also bicycled 15 times across America. I scuba dived in all the oceans of the world. It’s been a glorious lifetime of adventures.

Why and how did I do all of that?

My dad said, "You can do that."

So, make my dad your dad. Repeat after him, "I can do that."

You bet your life you can! Merry Christmas from our house to your house.

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