

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

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What Are You Doing “At Large”?

If you're a regular reader of the Morris Herald, you probably recognize the name of Gordon Kirkland.

Kirkland is the author of *Kirkland At Large*, a weekly column about the humorous side of daily life which is syndicated in hundreds of small town newspapers like the Herald. Kirkland writes from his small home town near Vancouver, British Columbia, and is recognized as one of North America's premier humor writers, having twice won Canada's Stephen Leacock Award of Merit for Humour.

Kirkland's column runs faithfully each week in the Herald, and he has been the guest of honor at the Morris Public Library more than once for storytelling and book signings.

Morris loves Gordon Kirkland, and Gordon Kirkland loves Morris.

People who read his witty columns might think that he's been doing this all his life. In fact, Kirkland was a successful senior consultant at Deloitte & Touche in Canada before his car was rear-ended 16 years ago. In one flash, Kirkland was rendered an incomplete paraplegic, meaning that his spinal column was partially severed, and left him with only 30% of the use of one of his legs and 60% of the other.

Today he is in pain most of the time, and can rarely stand for more than 10 minutes. He is a large man to begin with, and the weight of his frame makes it even more difficult to maneuver.

But rather than look on the tragedy as the end, his wife saw it as a potential beginning.

She had been watching him write for others all his life, and saw how miserable he was. She suggested that he begin to finally write things that HE wanted to write. He pondered that thought while his recuperation continued.

One day, while in his recovery period, a huge snowstorm all but shut down everything in Vancouver. Kirkland had always smiled at Vancouver residents' tastes for the finer things in life, and so he wrote a humorous, tongue-in-cheek article about the event and submitted it to his small town newspaper with this headline:

“DISASTER STRIKES VANCOUVER; RESIDENTS WITHOUT CAPPUCINO”

He sent it to his local hometown paper, and to his surprise, they printed it.

The rest, as they say, is history.

It took a tragedy like an auto accident for Gordon Kirkland to realize his true calling, and today he loves what he does. He's bold, he's outrageous, and he takes chances with the words he writes, but he's not afraid to be who he is. And he's very, very funny.

What are you doing that's "at large"?

What could you be doing with your business, your career, your talents, or your personal life that would be described by others as being bold, daring, courageous, or "at large"?

What have you dreamed of doing that you've been afraid to pull the trigger on?

Maybe it's a fundamental business change, or an upgrade in your career. Maybe it's a recognition that your talents aren't being used to their fullest potential, and it's time to use them properly. Maybe it's to go back to school, to ask someone on a date, to join a church, or to go to Hawaii.

Maybe it's even more outrageous than that.

What would make you more alive and "at large" right now?

Will it take a tragedy to get you to that point of action?

You may not be faced with the physical challenges of a Gordon Kirkland, but something may have to happen to move you from your place of comfort and safety to the place of new opportunities.

Gordon's fourth book, "I Think I'm Having One Of Those Decades," is now available on his Website (www.GordonKirkland.com), along with several samples of his columns and much more. You'll even find a story about his visits to Morris, IL on page 105.

I was inspired by Gordon Kirkland to live "at large."

What will it take for you to do the same?

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