

Don't Worry About POTY – We're Not Going To Win

Isn't December a stressful enough time of year for most of us without going out of our way to find things to worry about?

For example, now that the nomination deadline has passed for the Press-Citizen's 2009 Person of the Year (POTY) award, I'm trying to stop fretting about it. I'm sure you don't obsess about silly things like this, but I probably look at it differently than you do.

Few of us have the credentials to warrant a nomination, but I can't help thinking about the point at which any of us could be considered a viable candidate. This could easily be accomplished by altering the rules slightly.

Suppose there was a Person of the Month, or (even better) Person of the Day. All of a sudden, our prospects are looking better – there may not be 364 other people out there with a stronger résumé than you or I.

Better yet, if you think about this in terms of everyone's supposed 15 minutes of fame, there are 35,040 of those in a year. That number is roughly half the population of Johnson County, therefore even inmates of the Johnson County Jail would have a 50-50 chance of being a winner. Hopefully, I'll be able to request that my 15 minutes isn't scheduled for the wee hours of the morning.

I'm not holding out a lot of hope that Person of the Quarter-Hour will ever gain any traction, so I'll have to play the cards being dealt. Technically, the POTY award recognizes "the group or individual who had the greatest impact on life in our community during the 2009 calendar year. Lifetime achievement and future possibilities should not be considered."

Alas - that's bad news for people like me who never have one particularly stellar year, but I have plenty of good intentions and plan to outlive practically everyone else. One of the few advantages of being middle-aged/old (I'm 56) is that given enough time, a consistent commitment to

almost anything eventually results in an impressive accumulation of achievements.

For example, I donated my first pint of blood at the UI DeGowin blood clinic at the advanced age of 35, and I attended a donor appreciation event later that same year. I was impressed by the people being honored for reaching the two-gallon and 5-gallon donation milestones – ten gallons seemed like an impossible goal.

Last year I passed that mark without thinking about it – after 80 donations it's just one more trip to the clinic. It's the same thing with community service – if you consistently volunteer for something year in and year out, after a few decades you start to believe that cumulatively you are a great humanitarian, possibly worthy of a prestigious award.

Anyway, I figure that another way for the common man to improve his chances of qualifying for a Person of the Year award would be for more media entities to sponsor one. I have a call in to the U of I Hospitals Noon News, which is a daily one-page flyer (front and back) that will soon be in danger of competing favorably with our traditional local newspapers with regard to comprehensive news reporting, if recent economic, advertising and lifestyle trends continue.

Technically, I guess I'm already a POTY winner because I was on the board of the Englert Civic Theatre when it was recognized as Person (Group?) of the Year in 2000. I don't know who ended up with the (presumably) big trophy, but there's an empty spot on my mantle where it's supposed to be, so I don't count that one.

I guess I'll have to bide my time until I accidentally do something spectacular, or until I can effect a rule change among the existing award options. Person of the Quarter-Hour is sounding better and better...

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