

WHAT TO DO WITH FAILED DREAMS AND SCHEMES

"Now when they come to evict us from the house, do they call first, or do they just show up?" With such naivety my wife has spoiled many a good plan to quit a dull but stable job and pursue my dream de jour.

I don't recall dreaming much as a boy. Though I enjoyed assembling model airplanes, I never waited for the glue to thoroughly dry before hanging the warped, droop-winged replicas from the ceiling of my room. I'm sure my impatience nipped dreams of a career in aeronautics before they blossomed.

Instead, I pursued a career as an electronics design engineer. And with my first job came new dreams and schemes. But while some of my colleagues in Dallas sold high-powered TV antennas for receiving blacked-out Cowboys football games, my kitty cat door alarm brought only laughs. What cat owner wants to spring from his recliner whenever Puddy Tat exercises a whim to come or go?

After a couple of years, unrelenting stress precipitated a move to a more sedate industry--and a different sort of dream. Needing to assemble elusive, hard-to-find statistical data, I envisioned creating a slick computer database that other data seekers would eagerly buy. But I never discovered how to persuade the data holders to willingly turn loose.

When the jogging craze broke out in the early 1970s, I imagined running marathons. But minimal physical endurance limited my distance to just a couple of miles.

Before our children arrived, a dream rampant among expectant parents also fell upon me: we'll do it right where others have failed. No further comment needed.

Then when the dream of running a lucrative mail order business from home began to germinate, I attended seminars and formulated plans. But the stay-at-home mother of our children questioned the heretofore unidentified source of free labor my scheme hinged upon. "Now exactly who will be doing all this work while you're off to your paying job every day?" See what I mean about naïve questions? So much for mail order.

When I began writing newspaper columns, my confidence that hard-boiled editors would eagerly gobble them up bordered on euphoria. Didn't happen. And once I actually announced my candidacy for a political office but withdrew within a week.

Over the past 20 years, dreams of writing books have fallen flat despite positive comments from publishers.

So what have I learned from these repeated episodes of failed dreamed and schemes?

Though most have run aground, dreams have motivated me to step from the status quo into a better understanding of myself. Dreams have tempered the tedium that settles in when I realize how much of life is consumed by waiting for one thing or another to happen. Spent dreams have often given life to fresh ones that hold the bright hope of success in their hands--and beckon me to come.

And while not every butterfly need be chased in this phase of life, I still dream about the books....