



## The Cancer of Conflict

I personally can't think of much good that comes from conflict within a Chapter. Feelings get hurt, people get mad, relationships sever, and on and on. Like a cancer, conflict can eat away at a Chapter from the inside out. So I have some ideas on what to do when you first begin to notice conflict irritation.

First, try to avoid public conflict whenever possible. (That's another reason why Chapter business meetings can be a good idea, and a better place to resolve differences of approach.) Rather than hash things out in a public, social setting (like a Chapter meeting), I'd recommend doing it in a more private way. In this regard, "clearing the air" can be a good thing. If someone has a better idea about how something could be done, it often happens that the better ideas help everyone.

Timely communication is another good idea. Did something happen that ruffled your feathers a bit? Let the other party know, soon. Letting it stew inside of you does no good at all. They (the other party) may not even know something was wrong, unless you tell them. As soon as possible, too. I was recently talked to about something that had happened over a year and a half ago. And not once during that time had the other party pulled me aside and said, "Hey Jerry, we need to talk." Talking to other GWTA leaders, I've heard stories that sometimes people hold a grudge about something for years.

Holding a grudge is a very bad thing. I've heard it described as "eating rat poison, and waiting for the rat to die." I do have a suggestion. If you feel the need to hold a grudge, put a time limit on it and then let it go. Truly let it go, not just kind of allow it to slip your mind. It will eat away at you, and you won't find peace. I'm not saying it's easy – it's much easier, in some ways, to have someone to focus all of your frustrations on and to vent your anger towards, but when you do this you are allowing that person to have power over your life, and you are allowing anger to control it. So either don't hold a grudge, or set a specified time limit for your angst, and let it go after that.

Sometimes conflict erupts because you screwed up. (Yes, it does happen that way.) If that's the case, I recommend you look the other party in the eye, apologize like you mean it, and then move on. No body is perfect, and we all make mistakes, especially if we're trying to do something bodacious, like change the status quo. It's ok to say you're sorry, so long as you mean it, and you try to avoid the problem in the future.

In that regard, I must also say that time has a way of healing many wounds. What seems like a very big deal today, may be nothing tomorrow. Most people tend to remember the good times, and bury the bad ones. That's probably a good thing. Make the good times great, and you'll further bury the bad ones.

I do have my own way of dealing with difficult people and things, and maybe it will help you. I made this up on my own, so it might not be clinically approved.

What I do when I tire of dealing with difficult people, is look them straight in the face, smile a good smile, and say to myself (certainly not out-loud), "Kiss my behind, and thank me for the privilege." (I might use another word for "behind".) Yes, that's what I do. Tends to make me laugh, and take myself (and the situation) far less seriously. Then I can deal with it in a more relaxed atmosphere. I can be more objective when I'm not so emotionally wrapped up in this or that issue. I make better decisions when I'm not angry, too. [And it makes people wonder when I'm smiling a lot, too.]

Another important fact to keep in mind when considering conflict is that, no matter what you do, you can't make everybody happy. You can try, but you will very likely fail. There will always be someone who's not as happy as you want. There's only so much you can do to find balance in a Chapter, and you have to do the best you can. Which doesn't always please everybody.

Ok, after all that, would you like to hear my conflict cancer cure? Go for a ride. Just get on your bike and head out. Maybe invite someone from the Chapter with you. Or the whole Chapter. Or just enjoy yourself on a scheduled Chapter ride. Remember what the Gold Wing Touring Association was originally about, and get out on the road. You'll feel better, and the troubles will begin to melt away.

The cancer of conflict is just a wrong turn on the road to "Destination Friendship". Get back on the right track, and you will all enjoy the ride.

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