

Herald-Journal

Noel Swain: Doing What's Comfortable

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My wife's grandmother, who lived near Travelers Rest for her whole life, was in her 90's when

Wanda got this great idea. Since Granny Turner had never seen the Atlantic Ocean, she thought she'd take her to visit it for the first time. So she loaded up her mom, two aunts, and a cousin, along with Granny, and headed for the beach. How exciting this was going to be for Granny, as she gazed out upon the vast expanse of the Atlantic for the very first time, waves white topping then crashing onto the sandy beach. Wanda could hardly wait.

So they got to their condo just before dark and went inside. Once there, all the ladies took Granny to the front door and walked out onto the deck facing the beach. With the anticipation of a child at Christmas, they all looked for Granny's reaction. (Now stopping the story right here for a moment, we all know that as we age, our penchant for enthusiasm wanes and, as mentioned before, Granny was in her 90's.) Now where were we? Oh yeah, they were all anxiously anticipating Granny's look of wonder and amazement. So she stepped out onto the deck, looked straight ahead, then to the right, then to the left, then turned around and said, "well, that's enough," and walked back inside! And that was it.

Not to be deterred, Wanda then decided that since Granny had never been to a Japanese Steak House where the chef prepared the meal in front of the guests, she would enjoy that experience. So the next night, off they

went to the restaurant. As soon as they walked in, Granny looked around and loudly announced, "Wanda, there's nothing but a bunch of foreigners in here!" After asking Granny to keep it down, they sat down to enjoy a delicious meal, cooked and served by the chef. As he seared the beef and put some on Granny's plate, Granny again, very loudly, announced, "I'm not eating that stuff. It's not cooked enough. You'll get worms!" On that, Wanda excused herself and went to the bathroom for a good cry. She had tried so hard. But in the end, Granny couldn't have cared less about visiting the ocean and eating food from a Japanese steak house. In fact she later told Wanda, "next time just take me to Hardee's and buy me a biscuit."

In the end, we all have our comfort zones, and Wanda had pulled Granny way out of hers. I have seen that often with some of the people I counsel. They want the returns that a good stock portfolio can produce, but a temporary drawdown of value on their portfolio is out of their comfort zone. They like the idea of growth, but they hate giving up the stability of a guaranteed interest rate. As advisors, we may want to take our clients to see the ocean, but if the only way they can be comfortable is to stay in Travelers Rest, we must respect that.