

“Encounters with a Paragon of Virtue”

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By Bob Lamonica

These two described encounters with Neal Coonerty, the well-known Santa Cruz “dynasty leader,” have become part of a body of political teachings for me, specifically as a double standards model of what appearances are important with the “dinner-party political set,” and the unaccountable, unapologetic, unremorseful leeway given to those who are selected as “our team” favorites, to be perceived and promoted as “winners,” in Santa Cruz as elsewhere.

I chance met Paragon of Virtue Neal Coonerty in front of the entrance to what was then Kinko’s Copy Center, where Walgreen’s is now, in downtown Santa Cruz late one January night in 1996. So, why not? I asked, “Would you like to be a proponent for the D.A. Recall?” [A second D.A. Art Danner Recall was about to be launched.] Suddenly, Neal Coonerty rages! Arms waving! Mouth spitting! Shouting! Unexpected, the rant was mostly incoherent. But, one thing did stick over the brief, attempt to intimidate, bizarre behavior episode. Paragon of Virtue Neal Coonerty said, “YOU’RE GOING TO RUIN EVERYTHING!” There was intentionally no opportunity provided for me to respond. In classic self-righteous form, immediately after his rant, he departs.

I called him the next day at his then-place of business, the Bookshop Santa Cruz. After what can best be described as a lying punk scoundrel’s attempt to deny the prior night’s encounter actually occurred, he said, “WHY DON’T YOU RUN FOR CITY COUNCIL?” I said, “I have.” Then, the Paragon of Virtue began a top-of-lungs yelling that I would say lasted 30 seconds. “LIAR! YOU LIAR! YOU LIAR!” After he calmed down, I said, “I ran for City Council in East Palo Alto in 1990. Would you like proof?” Neal Coonerty’s terse response was, “I have to go” and he hung up. The following day, I left a piece of my former campaign’s literature for him at the Bookshop Santa Cruz.

I’ve never expected even an acknowledgement from the famed Paragon of Virtue Neal Coonerty, let alone accountability or an expression of remorse, ever. Why would he? Why would he stoop to even acknowledge that I exist? And, after all, I provoked him, right? It’s my fault! *It’s Neal Coonerty that’s righteous!* Beyond reproach! A Paragon of Virtue! People like Neal Coonerty are beyond amends, especially to a perceived nobody like myself. And, most importantly, they are given excused cover by their political cronies, who want to “win.”