



JOHN PAUL, DMD  
FDA EDITOR

# I NEED A HERO

*Dr. Paul can be reached at [jpaul@bot.floridadental.org](mailto:jpaul@bot.floridadental.org).*

I was wearing a long face and being generally disgruntled by all the goings on in this great country when I walked into the room with one of my favorite patients and longtime advisors, Ima Mae Gruntbuns, a great American. Not being one to let me rest on my laurels or rain on any parade she is enjoying, she questioned my lack of enthusiasm for being alive one more day. I complained that people just seem to be sliding back into the slime. Folks I know and like are being nasty to one another. Others think they can run amok, spouting hate and destroying things that don't belong to them. When one side behaves badly, the other side tries to top them and then the "news" tells you about the worst of us every hour on the hour in gory detail with plenty of video from every angle.

Mrs. Gruntbuns pulled me up short. She said, "Son, you are looking in the wrong place for inspiration. Just because you get elected or you are famous or someone points a camera your way, doesn't make you a leader or a hero. All those pictures on your Marvel comics scrub top are fiction."

That was a little disheartening because my wife thinks I look like Thor now that I wear a beard, but Mrs. Gruntbuns wasn't slowing down.

"Turn off the TV and put down the phone. Last April when no one knew who had or who might die from the coronavirus, who opened his office and removed that fish bone stuck between Mr. Gruntbuns' teeth?" she continued.

I replied, "Well, I did Mrs. Gruntbuns, but he's a friend and I was just doing what I know how to do with the tools I have on hand ..."

"Yes, Doc — but you did it. You came in and got him out of pain. He carries that bone around in his wallet and he's still telling people about it.

"Who grabs people's tongues with a piece of cotton, pulls it out past their nose and stares at that hangy-down thing and whatever else is in the back of our mouths to make sure we don't have cancer, or at least catch it early so we can cure it?"

"Well, we dentists do, Mrs. Gruntbuns, but it's just what we were taught to do in school and it's the right thing to do," I responded.

She went on. "Have you counted up the lives you've saved, the suffering you prevented? There is a hero or two in every dental office. Every once in a while, an 'Atta-girl/boy' and a pat on the back goes a long way, but you don't need the satellite truck and the pretty newsreader to verify what you do. Just keep doing it for all of us regular folks who may not be famous either but deserve your best effort every day."

It's hard to argue with someone who is so right.



JOHN PAUL, DMD, EDITOR, *TODAY'S FDA*