

REED

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father died. He said he discovered at an early age he loved swimming.

"Swimming teaches you about goals and teamwork," Reed said. "You set your personal goal and you set steps in order to achieve those goals. I've applied that to my life over and over again. It keeps you focused and gives you a plan."

Reed began his high school career at East High School. After two years, however, he transferred to Horseheads because of the strength of its swimming program.

It's at Horseheads that Reed met swimming coach Fred Seither.

"Tom was a great kid," Seither said. "He was a great kid to coach. He was the team captain his senior year. He had a lot of personality. He always had everybody laughing and smiling. He was good for team morale that way."

Reed excelled in Horseheads' swimming program, winning sectional titles and even making a run for a state championship in the 200-meter freestyle his senior year.

His quest for a state title, however, fell about 25 yards short.

"I was crushing (the competition)," Reed said. "I was a body and a half ahead of everybody at 100 yards. At 150 yards I'm still out there. I must have been a body length ahead. I remember vividly thinking 'I got this.'"

Seither said he and his assistants couldn't believe what happened next.

"We laugh about that now," Seither said. "Tom led the field until the last turn. After the last turn he was still ahead, then it was like a load of bricks was dropped on him."

Reed had hit the proverbial wall.

"I get to 175-yard mark and all of a sudden at that last flip at 175 it was like a gorilla came out of the seats and jumped on my back," Reed said. "They caught me at the end. I finished third or fourth."

Despite a disappointing finish in sectionals, Reed went on to swim at Alfred University.

He was so successful at Alfred that, upon graduation, he was offered the opportunity to be an assistant swim coach at the school. This would have allowed Reed to receive his master's degree for free.

Reed, however, wanted to become a lawyer. While working a summer job at the law firm of Cole and Latham, Reed said Bob Cole urged him to follow his dream.

Unfortunately, the two colleges he applied to, Valparaiso and Ohio Northern University, weren't interested. Reed, however, wouldn't be deterred.

"I packed up my car and I drove out to (Ohio Northern)," Reed said. "I showed up at my dean's office and said 'I want to go to law school. I know I haven't been admitted and I know you didn't



Tom Reed talks to supporters after winning the Corning mayoral election in 2007.

let me in, but I'm here and I'm really interested.' He took two days, but ultimately said 'If you have the (guts) to pack up your car and be here, you have a spot.'"

After graduating from law school, Reed was ready to settle down and practice law in Rochester. He was hired by the law firm of Gallo and Iacovangelo and had begun to establish himself as a municipal attorney when once again fate tragically interceded in Reed's life.

His mother passed away.

"I spent a lot of time at home at that time," Reed said. "I held her when she died. It was a tough day. At the funeral, Bob Cole, said 'You've got a cubicle if you ever need one.' He rented me a cubicle in his office."

Just like that, Reed walked away from a budding law career with an established firm and struck out on his own.

Joe Rizzo, who hired Reed for Gallo and Iacovangelo, said that decision spoke volumes about the kind of person Reed was.

"He has a lot of pride in where he comes from," Rizzo said. "He literally left his job, left his home in Rochester and moved back to ensure his family would

have a continued presence in his hometown. That spoke volumes to me. It showed a great deal of courage and a great deal of loyalty to the community. That's when I really knew this kid was something special."

As Reed's law practice grew and prospered, he began to turn an eye toward politics. Reed admitted he'd always been interested in running for political office, but running for mayor of Corning was not on his radar at the time.

Then something happened to galvanize Reed's will and force his

hand: the rise of Frank Coccho.

Coccho's tenure as mayor of Corning convinced Reed his hometown deserved better.

Reed said that while many were supportive of his run for Corning mayor, some, like Republican powerbroker Tom Tranter and Assemblyman Jim Bacalles, R-Corning, were doubting Reed's ability to get elected.

Reed defied many people's expectations by handily beating Coccho.

He was considering his

re-election campaign when once again an elected official, this time former Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning, made Reed reconsider his plan.

"With all due respect to Eric, I disagreed with him," Reed said. "I disagreed with the philosophies he represented and I disagreed with the way Obama was going." Reed's former boss

Rizzo suggested Reed consider a run for the House.

"We called out to him and said 'we need someone like you,'" Rizzo said. "It was like a call of duty for him, rather than an ambition of his. He was very much entrenched in being the mayor. It was not an easy decision for him to turn his attention from

the City of Corning, which is near and dear to him, and focus on something bigger."

Reed said the resistance from party elders was even greater this time.

"When I came to the local people and said we're going run, that didn't sit too well," Reed said. "I was politely told, 'You're going to stay here as mayor.' I was told 'Why don't you go for Bacalles' seat? Why don't you go up the ladder?' My understanding was they were going to give Eric a pass. I said, 'No, I'm going to do this.' That's been the cause of some heartburn early on in the race."

Reed's candidacy hasn't come without its share of controversy. He took some heat early on for taking a stand against President Obama's economic stimulus plan despite making several requests for stimulus money as mayor of Corning.

Reed said his opinion of the stimulus package evolved after he saw

how the money was being spent.

"As time went on, my concerns about the stimulus continued to grow and strengthen," Reed said. "We were not seeing the improvements they guaranteed. It wasn't going to the places they said it was going to go. Just because I had taken a position, if that position had been proven to be wrong, I am not going to say, 'I took the position so I'm going to continue with that position.'"

With election day less than two weeks away, Reed seems poised to take advantage of the anti-Democrat sentiment that's currently rampant. A poll conducted last month showed Reed with a double-digit lead over his opponent.

Reed has learned his lesson, however, from his state championship meet his senior year of high school. It doesn't matter who leads at the halfway mark. The only lead that matters is the one at the end of the race.



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