Toward a brighter future for all

1 Good afternoon! As president of the university I am proud to welcome you to this university. Your achievement is the triumph of years of hard work both of your own and of your parents and teachers. Here at the university we pledge to make your educational experience as rewarding as possible.

2 In welcoming you to the university I am reminded of my own high school graduation and the photograph my mom took of my dad and me. "Pose naturally" Mom instructed us. "Wait!" said Dad "Let's take a picture of me handing him an alarm clock." The clock woke me up every morning in college. It is still on my office desk.

3 Let me share with you something that you may not expect. You will miss your old routines and your parents' reminders to work hard and attain your best. You may have cried tears of joy to be finally finished with high school and your parents may have cried tears of joy to be finally finished with doing your laundry! But know this: The future is built on a strong foundation of the past.

4 For you these next four years will be a time unlike any other. Here you are surrounded by great resources: interesting students from all over the country a learned and caring faculty a comprehensive library great sports facilities and student organizations covering every possible interest from the arts to science to community service and so on. You will have the freedom to explore and learn about new subjects. You will learn to get by on very little sleep meet fascinating people and pursue new passions. I want to encourage you to make the most of this unique experience and to use your energy and enthusiasm to reap the benefits of this opportunity.

5 You may feel overwhelmed by the wealth of courses available to you. You will not be able to experience them all but sample them widely! College offers many things to do and to learn and each of them offers a different way to see the world. If I could give you only one piece of advice about selecting courses it would be this: Challenge yourself! Don't assume that you know in advance what fields will interest you the most. Take some courses in fields you've never tried before. You will not only emerge as a more broadly educated person but you will also stand a better chance of discovering an unsuspected passion that will help to shape your future. A wonderful example of this is the fashion designer Vera Wang who originally studied art history. Over time Wang paired her studies in art history with her love of fashion and turned it into a passion for design which made her a famous designer around the world.

6 Here at the university it may not always be pleasant to have so many new experiences all at once. In your dorm the student next door may repeatedly play the one song which gives you a giant headache! You may be an early bird while your roommate is a night owl! And still you and your roommate may become best friends. Don't worry if you become a little uncomfortable with some of your new experiences. I promise you that the happy experiences will outweigh the unpleasant ones. And I promise that virtually all of them will provide you with valuable lessons which will enrich your life. So with a glow in your eye and a song in your heart step forward to meet these new experiences!

7 We have confidence that your journey toward self-discovery and your progress toward finding your own passion will yield more than personal advancement. We believe that as you become members of our community of scholars you will soon come to recognize that with the abundant opportunities for self-enrichment provided by the university there also come responsibilities. A wise man said: "Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another." You are the inheritors of the hard work of your families and the hard work of many countless others who came before you. They built and transmitted the knowledge you will need to succeed. Now it is your turn. What knowledge will you acquire? What passions will you discover? What will you do to build a strong and prosperous future for the generations that will come after you?

8 We take great pleasure in opening the door to this great step in your journey. We take delight in the many opportunities which you will find and in the responsibilities that you will carry as citizens of your communities your country and the world. Welcome!

﻿

What we wish

My dear child

1 You are about to participate in the next leg of your journey through life. For us this part is bittersweet. As you go off to college exciting new worlds will open up to you. They will inspire and challenge you; you will grow in incredible ways.

2 This is also a moment of sadness. Your departure to college makes it undeniably clear that you are no longer a child. There has been no greater joy than watching you arrive at this moment. You have turned our greatest challenge into our greatest pride. Although we have brought you to this point it is hard to watch you depart. Remember above all things we will miss you.

3 College will be the most important time of your life. It is here that you will truly discover what learning is about. You often ask "Why do I need to know this?" I encourage you to stay inquisitive but remember this: "Education is what remains after one has forgotten everything he learned in school." What you learn is not as important as the fact that you learn. This is the heart of scholarship: moving from teacher-taught to master-inspired on over to the point where you become a self-learner. So take each subject seriously and if something doesn't immediately engage you don't despair. Embrace it as a challenge. Find a way to make it your own.

4 Of course you must still take care to sign up for courses which stimulate your passion and your intellectual capacity. Don't be bound by what other people think. Steve Jobs said when you are in college your passion will create many dots and later in your life you will connect them. So don't worry too much about what job you will have; don't be too practical. If you like French or Korean study it even if someone else tells you that it's not useful. Enjoy picking your "dots". Be assured that one day you will find your own meaningful career and you will connect a beautiful curve through those dots.

5 You know that we always want you to do your best but don't let the pressure of grades get to you. We care only that you try your very best and that you learn. It is better that your greatest effort earns a lesser grade than that no effort earns you a decent or higher grade. Grades in the end are simply letters fit to give the vain something to boast about and the lazy something to fear. You are too good to be either. The reward is not the grade but what you learn.

6 More importantly make friends and trust others. The friends you make in college can be the best ones you will ever have. During these years when you move into adulthood the friends you make in college live closer to you than your family. You will form bonds of friendship that will blossom over many decades. Pick friends who are genuine and sincere. Select a few and become truly close to them. Don't worry about their hobbies grades or looks. Instead trust your instincts when you make new friends. You are a genuine and sincere person; anyone would enjoy your friendship. So be confident secure and proactive. If you think you like someone tell them. You have very little to lose. Don't be afraid to trust. Give others the benefit of the doubt and don't reduce anyone to stereotypes. Nobody is perfect; as long as others are genuine trust them and be good to them. They will give back.

7 Remember also that your youth is full of strength and beauty something that you will not comprehend until it is gone. You must guard and cultivate your strength and beauty. A healthy body and a sound mind are the greatest instruments you will ever possess. Enjoy life. Dance if you feel like it. Dont be afraid of what other people think. But also keep yourself safe and sound. Dont let the range of new experiences take your innocence health or curiosity away from you. Treasure your youth and the university experience before you.

8 College is the time when you have: the first taste of independence the greatest amount of free time the most flexibility to change the lowest cost for making mistakes.

9 Approach these years enthusiastically! Make the most of your time. Become the great thinker you were born to be. Let your talents evolve to their fullest potential. Be bold! Experiment! Learn and grow! We are enormously proud that youve made it this far and we cant wait to see what you will become.

Your father

A child's clutter awaits an adult's return

1 I watch her back her new truck out of the driveway. The vehicle is too large too expensive. She'd refused to consider a practical car with good gas efficiency and easy to park. It's because of me I think. She bought it to show me that she could.

2 "I'm 18" she'd told me so often that my teeth ached. "I am an adult!"

3 I thought is that true? Just yesterday you watched some cartoons. What changed between yesterday and today?

4 Today she's gone off to be an adult far away from me. I'm glad she's gone. It means she made it and that I'm finally free of 18 years of responsibilities. And yet I wonder if she could take good care of herself.

5 She left a mess. Her bathroom is an embarrassment of damp towels rusted shaving blades hair in the sink and nearly empty tubes of toothpaste. I bring a box of big black garbage bags upstairs. Eye shadow face cream nail polish all go into the trash. I dump drawers sweep shelves clear and clean the sink. When I am finished it is as neat and impersonal as a hotel bathroom.

6 In her bedroom I find mismatched socks under her bed and purple pants on the closet floor. Desk drawers are filled with school papers field by year and subject. I catch myself reading through poems and essays admiring high scores on tests and reading her name printed or typed neatly in the upper right-hand corner of each paper. I pack the desk contents into a box. Six months I think. I will give her six months to collect her belongings and then I will throw them all away. That is fair. Grown-ups pay for storage.

7 I have to pause at the books. Comic books teen fiction romantic novels historical novels and textbooks. A lifetime of reading; each book beloved. I want to be practical to stuff them in paper sacks for the used bookstore. But I love books as much as she does so I stack them onto a single bookshelf to deal with later.

8 I go for her clothes. Dresses sweaters and shoes she hasn't worn since seventh grade are placed into garbage bags. I am a plague of locusts emptying the closet. Two piles grow to clumsy heights: one for charity the other trash.

9 There are more shoes stuffed animals large and small posters hair bands and pink hair curlers. The job grows larger the longer I am at it. How can one girl collect so much in only 18 years?

10 I stuff the garbage bags until the plastic strains. I haul them down the stairs two bags at a time. Donations to charity go into the trunk of my car; trash goes to the curb. I'm earning myself sweat and sore shoulders.

11 She left the bedroom a ridiculous mess the comforter on the floor the sheets tossed aside. I strip off the comforter blanket sheets and pillows. Once she starts feeding coins into laundry machines she'll appreciate the years of clean clothes I've provided for free.

12 I will turn her room into a crafts room. Or create the fancy guest room I've always wanted.

13 I turn the bed over. A large brown envelope is marked "DO NOT THROW AWAY." I open it. More papers. I dump the contents onto the floor. There are old family photographs letters greeting cards and love notes from us to her. There are comics clipped from newspapers and magazines. Every single item in this envelope has passed from our hands to hers. These are all things that we gave her. Suddenly I feel very emotional.

14 "DO NOT THROW AWAY".

15 My kid my clutter bug knows me too well. As I read through the cards and notes I think maybe the truck wasn't such a bad idea after all. Maybe it helps her to feel less small in a big world.

16 I reverse myself and bring back the garbage bags from the car and the curb. Clothes and shoes go back into the closet. I remake the bed and pile it with stuffed animals. My husband comes home and calls up the stairs.

17 "Just straightening up" I tell him. "Can you find some boxes for her stuff?"

18 He brings up boxes from the basement.

19 "She left a mess" he says.

20"I don't mind" I reply. Silence.

21 Then he says softly "She's not coming back." I feel my throat tighten at the sadness in his voice. I try hard to keep back my tears.

22 My little baby my dependent child isn't coming back. But someday my daughter the independent woman will return home. Tokens of her childhood will await her. So will we with open arms.

Time slows down  
  
1 "Daddy let's take a walk."  
2 It's an April day in Virginia. He nods puts his hands on the arms of his wheelchair whispers something that makes little sense. I try to help him up but he is too heavy and limp.   
3 "Come for a walk and then I've brought you a surprise."  
4 The white curtains surge in the breeze.   
5 Shivering he complains it's chilly. "It's cold I'm tired. Can't we go home now?"  
6 Suddenly we're far away in a time long past in part of a harbor I've never seen before. December Chicago I'm five and cold. One glove is lost. My feet are tired. His legs are longer; he strides quickly through melting snow toward buildings like airplane sheds with immense doors.   
7 This is the most exciting place I have ever been. Suddenly my fatigue is gone. I could walk along here forever at least until I find out how to get aboard one of the boats.  
8 We slow down our pace. Smaller sheds now. A green diner. Smells of fish and smoke. We enter a little hut. Barrels of salty water string bags of shellfish bundles of fish laid out on ice.  
9 "Daddy look at that snake!"  
10 "No that's an eel" says Daddy. "Smoked. We'll take a portion home for supper."  
11 "I certainly won't eat that!"  
12 "All right" he says and carries the smelly package. As we walk back he tells me about migrations of eels to the Sargasso Sea: how eels come down Dalmatian rivers and swim across the Mediterranean and then the whole Atlantic until they reach the warm Sargasso Sea. Here they lay their eggs and then the baby eels swim back to the native rivers of their parents.  
13 Back at last in the apartment he unwraps the eel opens his pocket knife and slices carefully.  
14 "I won't eat it" I say suspiciously.  
15 "Try one bite just for me."  
16 "I won't like it."  
17 While he hangs up our coats I test one pinch. Smelly smoky and salty.  
18 He goes into the kitchen to heat milk for me and tea for himself. I test another pinch. Then another. He returns with the steaming cups.  
19 The eel has vanished.  
20 Because it is Sunday and I am five he forgives me. Time slows down and the love flows in father to daughter and back again.  
21 At 19 I fly out to Japan. My father and I climb Mount Fuji. High above the Pacific and hours up the slope we picnic on dried eel seaweed crackers and cold rice wrapped in the eel skin. He reaches the peak first.   
22 As the years stretch we walk along waterways all over the world. With his long stride he often overtakes me. I've never known anyone with such energy.   
23 Some days time flies with joy all around. Other days time rots like old fish.   
24 Today in the nursing home in Virginia anticipating his reluctance I beg boldly and encourage him "Please Daddy just a little walk. You are supposed to exercise."  
25 He can't get out of his chair. Not that he often gets up on his own but once in a while he'll suddenly have a surge of strength. I stoop to lift his feet from the foot restraints fold back the metal pieces which often scrape his delicate paper-thin skin. "Come now you can stand."  
  
26 He grips the walker and struggles forward. Gradually I lift and pull him to his feet. Standing unsteadily he sways and then gains his balance.   
27 "See you made it! That's wonderful! All right I'll be right behind you my hand in the small of your back. Now forward march!"  
28 He is impatient with the walker as I accompany him to the dining room. I help him to his chair and hand him a spoon. It slips from his fingers. Pureed tuna is heaped on a plastic plate. I encourage him sing him old songs tell stories but he won't eat. When I lift a spoonful of gray fishy stuff to his mouth he says politely "I don't care for any."  
29 Nor would I.   
30 Then I take the small smelly package covered in white wrapping paper from a plastic bag. He loves presents and he reaches forward with awkward fingers to try to open it. The smell fills the room.  
31 "Look Daddy they've been out of it for months but at last this morning at the fish seller near the Potomac I found some smoked eel."  
32 We unwrap it and then I take out the Swiss Army Knife my beloved aunt gave me "for safekeeping" and slice the silvery flesh.   
33 "What a beautiful picnic" my father beams.  
34 He takes a sip of his champagne and then with steady fingers picks up a slice of eel and downs it easily. Then another and another until he eats the whole piece. And again time slows down and the love flows in daughter to father and back again.

College life in the Internet age

1 The college campus long a place of scholarship and frontiers of new technology is being transformed into a new age of electronics by a fleet of laptops smartphones and connectivity 24 hours a day.

2 On a typical modern-day campus where every building and most outdoor common areas offer wireless Internet access one student takes her laptop everywhere. In class she takes notes with it sometimes instant-messaging or emailing friends if the professor is less than interesting. In her dorm she instant-messages her roommate sitting just a few feet away. She is tied to her smartphone which she even uses to text a friend who lives one floor above her and which supplies music for walks between classes.

3 Welcome to college life in the 21st century where students on campus are electronically linked to each other to professors and to their classwork 24/7 in an ever-flowing river of information and communication. With many schools offering wireless Internet access anywhere on campus colleges as a group have become the most Internet accessible spots in the world.

4 Students say they really value their fingertip-access to the boundless amount of information online and the ability to email professors at 2 a.m. and receive responses the next morning. "I always feel like I have a means of communication in class and out of class" says one engineering major.

5 Many are using smartphones not only to create their own dialects when texting but also to do more serious work such as practicing foreign languages and analyzing scripts from their theater classes. In a university class on the history of American radio students use smartphones to record their own radio shows. The course instructor said "It's adding to students' sense of excitement about the subject." Professors have been encouraged to tape their lectures and post them online. "We realized there might be some potential for a device that could get attention and encourage sophisticated thinking" says one leading university director.

6 For most undergraduates non-stop Internet connectivity is the fuel of college life. More than just toys these instruments are powerful tools for the storage and management of virtually every kind of information. And as more people around the world adopt these instruments they are becoming indispensable. So students should use the wonders of the Internet to do homework review lecture outlines take part in class discussions and network online with their friends. But in doing so students must remember to regulate and balance their time. Too much time online can mean too little time in real-life studying or exercising or visiting with friends. Students should not let the Internet world on their computer screens take them away from the real world outside.

7 Colleges began embracing Internet access in the mid-1990s when many began wiring dorms with high-speed connections. In the past few years schools have taken the lead by turning their campuses into bubbles of Wi-Fi networks. In fact a recent study in the US found that information technology accounted for 5% to 8% of college budgets up from an estimated 2% to 3% in the mid-1980s.

8 On one campus students use Wi-Fi to fire off instant messages review their homework assignments and check their bank balances. Just nine miles down the highway another university had been feeling a bit of a technology inferiority complex. To compensate it spent tens of thousands of dollars to give every one of its incoming freshmen a free Apple iPad.

9 Some universities even require that all students own or lease a laptop. Some say the focus on technology prepares students for a wired world. "You have to keep up with the rest of the world. Students expect high-bandwidth information and if you can't deliver it you're at a competitive disadvantage" states a university president.

10 Other colleges are straining to stand out from their peers. The race to attract students with the most modern networks and the hottest systems has reached fever pitch. Some business majors are receiving free portable computers. In an always-connected mode they can get information anytime and anywhere they need. One university is even giving its freshmen new smartphones to enrich the student experience and prepare them for success in a rapidly changing world.

11 For those who prefer to travel laptop-free colleges supply several computer labs. And for students who study late into the night many have set up 24-hour repair shops where students can get their laptops fixed by the next day and receive a loaner in the meantime.

12 Colleges around the world have been replacing their computer systems for the past decade in large part to provide students with the most advanced free system. The anywhere-anytime access has already yielded amazing benefits in education. With the widespread application of computer technologies we are going to produce a generation of problem-solvers and intelligent thinkers which is indispensable for the future of the world.

Too much of a good thing A real addiction

1 Perhaps the greatest change the world has seen in modern times has been the rise of the Internet. It's hard to deny the positive changes it adds to people's lives as it makes life easier with quick access to things like maps news and online stores. As a research tool it is unmatched. It's a great way to keep up with friends. It enables a wealth of media outlets and alternative news sources. Internet access and the ability to make good use of it is practically a must for success in the modern world.

2 Like any technology though it has negative aspects that become clear as we start to depend upon it. Like pollution and traffic jams that come with the convenience of cars Internet access has proven so popular that it has given rise to a new kind of social epidemic Internet addiction.

3 Consider the following stories. A few years ago a couple in the United States was charged with child neglect. It was their addiction to playing games online that kept them from caring for their two infant children. Another recent news story told of a man who spent so much time online that he didn't sleep enough to keep his job. Eventually he lost his house but kept his laptop and still spent all day online.

4 College students are impacted as well. There are many stories of excellent students who lost their university scholarships from poor grades or of other students who failed at the university altogether simply because they spent too much time online. One student not only failed but lost 12 pounds. He was so involved online that he forgot to eat! Imagine the agony of this condition!!

5 These things did not happen to these people because they were lazy or stupid. They happened because of addiction. New college students even the brightest and most successful ones are most at risk from these effects because the Internet is important for their studies and because they are just entering a world where their online habits are no longer monitored by concerned parents. Without the discipline and structure of home students have to manage time by themselves. During their very first term their grades can plunge their health decline and their friendships cease.

6 It is easy for those who are unaffected by the powerful draw of connectivity those who can easily control their time online to view Internet addiction as an imaginary problem or to attribute its origins to a weak personality. But the brain chemistry behind Internet addiction is not imaginary. Many common Internet interactions such as scoring points in online games getting emails or instant messages finding new blog entries all cause the release of endorphins in the brain. Endorphins are the essential brain chemicals connected with positive feelings of success and pleasure. This is no surprise considering that Internet interactions often involve succeeding at a challenge or having social exchanges. Our brains reward us for these activities in real life all the time.

7 The trouble with the Internet is that it makes it possible to have unnaturally long periods of endorphin release sustained rewards from the brain that are as quick as the click of a mouse. These rewards are not actual useful real-life rewards but simple stimulation that arouses positive feedback in the brain. In real life endorphins encourage us to interact with friends or family or attempt to learn something new. With Internet addiction endorphins do nothing but keep people hooked to their computers. Internet addicts behave very much like gamblers pulling the lever at machines in Las Vegas even if it is not rational hurts their studies or spoils their health and their lives.

8 So watch how much time you spend online; moderation is your best defense against Internet addiction. Use the wonders of connectivity to enrich your studies stay connected with distant friends and explore multiple new worlds. Just be careful. Notice if you find you are thinking about the Internet even when you're not online or if you prefer your online time to time with your real-life friends or if you hide or lie about how much time you spend online. If you find yourself doing any of these things take a step back. Look for other ways to enjoy your life. Get some exercise which is a major source of endorphins! Visit a museum or a beautiful park. Get together with friends to study or schedule some fun time to relax. The Internet is a powerful tool but make sure that you use it wisely for all the good value it offers and that you won't let too much of a good thing become something bad.

Heroes among us

1 Who's a hero these days? In an era of heightened heroism the word hero has become more common. We use hero to describe both victims and survivors of all kinds of difficulties and tragedies. Who are the heroes among us?

2 In the days subsequent to a mass shooting in Tucson Arizona many described 20-yearold political associate Daniel Hernandez as a hero. During the horrible shooting he courageously ran through the danger to save the life of one of the victims his boss and friend congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. Daniel held her head up so she could breathe and applied pressure to her wounds. He spoke tender words of sympathy telling her that he would find her husband and her parents and that everything would be fine. And he never left her side staying beside her in the ambulance all the way to the hospital.

3 Another hero from the mass shooting in Tucson was Dory Stoddard. Dory gave his life for his wife Mavy. Dory and his wife had been friends since childhood and when Dory heard shots ring out he immediately fell on top of his wife to shield her from the hail of bullets. At the memorial service the priest said: "Dory didn't die a hero; he lived a hero." Long known for his remarkable spirit and love of humanity Dory Stoddard died as he had always lived assisting others.

4 These are civilian heroes who acted instinctively with courage and grace when caught up in extraordinary circumstances.

5 But what about first responders whose job is in the words of the widow of a fallen police officer to "rush toward danger"?

6 In Toronto Canada downtown life stopped when more than 11000 police and other emergency responders marched solemnly through the streets to honor Sergeant Ryan Russell a 35-year-old "good man and good cop" who believed deeply in his commitment to protect and serve. Sgt. Russell moved quickly to protect others from harm. He tried to stop a drunk driver in a stolen snowplow with only his police automobile and his goodwill to help others. Sadly Sgt. Russell was unable to stop the drunk driver and was killed in the effort.

7 It used to be that the word hero was reserved for those who performed acts of distinct courage beyond the call of duty. A soldier who runs through gunfire to rescue other military personnel is seen as a hero. So are larger-than-life leaders such as Nelson Mandela who emerged after 27 years of jail confined in a solitary chamber. He made the choice not to be bitter and worked hard as South Africa's first black president to establish harmony and helped society reconcile its conflicted past.

8 But today our heroes are average men and women "everyday heroes" to whom we can relate people like us.

9 However while many people honor Sgt. Russell some people raise this question when they try to make sense of a tragedy like Sgt. Russell's: "Some first responders do not succeed in helping others and they get injured or die in their efforts. Do these people become heroes because of what happens to them as they try to help others instead of what they actually make happen?"

10 I asked road safety advocate Eleanor McMahon whether she thought Sgt. Russell was a hero. Ms. McMahon's late husband a police officer was killed by a drunk truck driver in a 2006 off-duty bicycling accident. Through grief and rage Ms. McMahon founded Share the Road a cycling association and worked tirelessly until the government established "Greg's Law" legislation that gave authority to police to immediately seize the automobiles of drunk drivers caught on the road.

11 Ms. McMahon replied that she thought Sgt. Russell was indeed a hero. "Just imagine in the middle of an intense snowstorm this policeman thinks: I've got to stop this snowplow before it hurts others." Ms. McMahon summed up why she considered many police officers to be heroes: "It's natural to be afraid of danger. It's natural for that fear to cause most people to rush toward safety and away from danger. Heroes do just the opposite. They rush toward danger to help those in need."

12 We count on first responders to rush toward danger especially when it involves us or those we love. We expect nothing less. So when one of them dies doing that we should recognize the heroic action even though we may doubt our own capacity to be heroic ourselves.

13 The inspiring stories of heroes help remind us that ordinary people can do extraordinary things whether it is in the fulfillment of their duties or as part of everyday life. We honor the fireman the policeman and the average citizen by recognizing their heroism. Perhaps even more importantly we honor them by working to change the circumstances that led to their death. By honoring them we can be inspired by them. Will we be heroes when circumstances call on us to act heroically? Hopefully we will!

A hero's aspiration

1 Officer Jonda's pulse quickened. Road conditions were dangerous on that cold dark wintery night. The fierce storm made it hard to see but she could tell the car ahead of her was in trouble. It was swaying. It was not swaying violently and was still barely within the lane but on the winding road in the fierce November rain it was enough. Jonda had a sixth sense for accidents and lived in terror of them ever since that awful night so many years ago. She still couldn't abolish the terrible image of that teenager screaming for help her help. Help that she had been unable to give as she was driven back by the intense heat of the car fire.

2 Her subsequent report on the incident had dutifully noted the facts as she had been trained to write them facts that did not include screams or pain. It was strange to talk about them one way: a string of facts for a police report; and to think about them in another: burning metal and deep tire tracks on the slippery concrete bits of safety glass like primitive crystals reflecting in pools of blood. These were memories Jonda could never really turn off. She leaned on her training for support and these days she never ignored any signs of the next accident. She made a gesture to turn on the patrol car's flashing lights but her partner David beat her to it; he too had sensed the danger. "Let's pull that car over before someone gets hurt" he said.

3 The big car slowed but not enough to stop at the warning sign as the driver slammed on the brakes. The car slipped off the road into the Dalton River.

4 Jonda quickly brought the police car to a halt and got out. Yelling at David to call for backup help she slipped down the side of the road to the water's edge.

5 The rain had swelled the river into a raging monster. It roared well over its banks rushing swiftly with tree limbs caught in the raging current. And half submerged in the current was the car. As big as it was the force of the water had heaved it against a tree the passenger seat submerged water rushing over the windshield. "Dear Lord!" Jonda prayed. "Never again!" This is too much too familiar Jonda thought.

6 The driver would not have had time to make it out Jonda knew. Her flashlight beam barely cut through the heavy rain but she could still see the trapped driver screaming and banging the window. And the car was filling up with water.

7 "David I need the window hammer!" Jonda called over her radio and rushed toward the car. By the time she was at the driver door the water was rushing up to her waist and unbelievably cold like her legs had been encased in ice. If she didn't work quickly she could lose the feeling in her lower body and collapse

8 Through the window Jonda saw the woman with water up to her chest. A work badge pinned to her chest identified her as Sandy. And she was old 65 or 70. She would not last long in the icy water. Her eyes betraying her intense fear were locked on Jonda's. "Save me" she screamed.

9 David caught up with Jonda and passed her the window hammer. "Ma'am" she yelled through the window "I need you to turn away from the glass! I'm going to break through!" The woman turned her head and Jonda struck. The glass thick as the old car was big barely cracked. And with a heavy heart Jonda felt the car heave. The current was loosening it from the tree.

10 Jonda struck again with all her might and this time mercifully the window broke into little pieces. Water rushed in and the car heaved again soon to be carried downstream.

11 The woman tried to speak through her shivering lips. "Tell my grandchildren I love them" she moaned.

12 Jonda leaned in and wrapped her arms around the woman. "We're not going to lose you Sandy! Put your arms around my neck and hold on! David grab my waist and pull!"

13 With all her strength in the icy water Jonda grabbed the slender woman out of her seat and through the broken window David pulling at her waist. The car heaved one last time and just as the woman cleared it it was swallowed by the water.

14 The woman was crying in Jonda's arms. "It's all right ma'am" Jonda said tears streaking down her cheeks unable to let go of the woman. "We didn't lose you! We didn't lose you!" she cried. Stiff and sore Sandy cried "Thank you!"

15 Since the accident the two women have become close friends. "She's a fantastic woman" Sandy says. "She just refused to let me die. I'm forever grateful to her." But Jonda feels she has much to be grateful for too because finally she is healed and free of the acute nightmares of her past.

Cliff Young an unlikely hero

1 Considered one of the toughest marathon events in the world the 875-kilometer annual Australian race a route from Sydney to Melbourne is a harsh test of endurance for the world's top athletes regardless of their age. The young super-fit runners train for months before a competition and are under contract to prominent sponsors like Nike and Adidas who finance them and furnish them with a substantial support mechanism of money and equipment. The contest takes up to seven days to complete and is a challenging test of fitness and strength even for world-class athletes who compete for distinction and a cash prize.

2 On the day of the race in 1983 Cliff Young a toothless 61-year-old farmer and amateur runner wearing rubber boots and much older than the other runners was in attendance. No one paid any attention to this odd-looking man who might as well have been invisible. The assembled crowd assumed Cliff was there to observe the race. When he asserted his intention to compete the world-class athletes around him reacted with apparent disbelief and then with disrespect. Obviously this was some sort of publicity trick.

3 But the press was curious so as he took his number and moved into the crush of runners in their special expensive racing gear the camera focused on him and the assembled reporters shouted question after question at Cliff. They asked: "Who are you?""What are you doing?"

4 "I'm Cliff Young. I'm from a large farm where we raise sheep outside of Melbourne."

5 They went on "What makes you think you can run this race? It takes a week to run this race on no more than six hours of sleep a night!"

6 Cliff replied "I've run sheep for two or three days at a time. This race should only be a couple more days than that. I believe I can do it."

7 Soon the marathon started and the young athletes left Cliff far behind. The crowds smiled and some laughed out loud because he didn't even run properly. He had the strangest running style; he appeared to shuffle. As the race progressed along of course the attention of the sports commentators and viewers alike was on the athletes at the front of the pack. Imagine everyone's surprise the next morning when the news showed Cliff was still in the race! Not only that but he had run through the entire night without sleeping. And it seemed that he intended to keep running until he reached the finish line or fell ill or was injured as many viewers now began to fear. They were uneasy and very concerned for his welfare. Many people said and even more people thought: "Surely someone should stop this insane old man before he really harms himself!"

8 But Cliff had no intention of stopping. Although he was still far behind the world-class athletes he kept at it. When he got to a major town he was asked about his plan for the rest of the race. He said he would just keep running and he did. With every passing hour and every shuffling step he got just a little bit closer to the race leaders. Later he told people that throughout the race he kept focused by imagining he was gathering his sheep and trying to outrun a storm.

9 By the fifth night he had overtaken them all. By the sixth day he led the whole pack of runners by a wide lead. He led all the way to the finish line smashing the record by finishing the 875-kilometer race in 5 days 15 hours and 4 minutes 9 hours faster than anyone before! In that instant Cliff Young became a beloved national hero.

10 When Cliff was awarded the first prize of $10000 he said he didn't know there was a prize and insisted that he had not entered for the money. He said "There're five other runners still out there doing it tougher than me" and he gave them $2000 each. He did not keep a single cent for himself. That act increased his fame and endeared him to all of Australia.

11 Cliff came to prominence again in 1997 at age 75 when he attempted to become the oldest man to run around Australia and raise money for homeless children.

12 For the rest of his life Cliff kept running. Over the years despite increasing age and physical challenges he participated in many races and won a number of them. It was said that Cliff Young never kept a single prize. People gave him watches because he never had one. He would thank them because he did not want to hurt their feelings but then gave them away to the first child he saw. He said "I don't need a watch. I know when it's daylight when it's dark and when I'm hungry."

13 His love for running never dimmed but in the year 2000 he suffered a mild stroke that ended his heroic running days. Cliff Young the running legend passed away on November 2 2003. He was 81.

14 To this day Cliff Young remains a magnificent reminder and brilliant example of how ordinary individuals can inherently achieve remarkable results. As the famous saying goes "Where there's a will there's a way!" With determination and preparation we can achieve distinction and be a brilliant example to others.

Shaping young lives with sports

1 The leaders of tomorrow are shaped and molded in the here and now. As the Roman poet Juvenal famously said "A healthy mind is to be found in a healthy body." For parents teachers and coaches there is no greater responsibility than sustaining the mental and physical health of our young people.

2 Growing children need inspiration and physical stimulation. Team sports are a great way to provide these attributes! More than just entertainment through sports young people learn critical skills that will serve them well in their adult lives. The ability to work toward a common goal underlines the value of teamwork. Being both humble in victory and generous in defeat emphasizes the mutual obligation of graceful manners in all human interactions. The lessons our youth learn will stay with them all their lives and there is no better place to assist this learning than on the playing field.

3 Of course the most critical lessons youngsters receive are those that they are taught by their parents and teachers. Nevertheless many lessons remain abstract concepts until they are made real by life experiences. You can talk about how bitter lemons are or how sweet honey is. However until you actually taste lemons and honey you cannot experience the true meaning of "bitter" and "sweet". Knowledge comes from the application of ideas in the experience of real life. Strategy teamwork and cooperation are crucial concepts that can be best learned and understood through sports. Team sports give children a natural place to work hard and learn valuable life lessons.

4 Naturally those who are inherently talented will spend more time on the field and will achieve fame. They have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and earn the respect of their team members. However the benefits of participating in team sports are not dependent on natural ability. Youth need not be stars to benefit from team membership. It doesn't matter whether they are gifted or even good at their chosen sport. As a famous American sportswriter said "It's not whether you win or lose. It's how you play the game."

5 Sports can inspire and encourage the less naturally talented athletes to be their best. What is missing in natural talent can be overcome through hard work practice and learning from the example of others. Those lacking in talent should never be envious and they may learn more about the real world than the gifted players because they learn early on that there are no free rides and they will have to make continuous effort if they want to achieve in this world. Through sports they will learn the value of individual hard work and even greater value of cooperation and teamwork. They will also learn the fundamental importance of planning and preparation for the positive outcome of their life's ambitions. These are all lessons that will be valuable to them throughout their entire lives both in their careers and their personal lives.

6 Of course participation in competitive team sports is not without hazards. Some psychologists have expressed considerable concern about the intensity of competition in youth sports. They argue that children often suffer psychological harm when the emphasis is exclusively on winning. A football coach famous for his competitive spirit said: "Winning isn't everything; it is the only thing." Such an outlook can be harsh on children when they feel pressured to win from the adults around them. Child psychologists often blame parents and coaches for being too demanding. By placing excessive emphasis on winning children miss the learning opportunities sports can offer. In such circumstances the sports experience uncovers negative draining and harmful consequences canceling out the many desirable effects of sports.

7 Sports teach much more than what is easily seen on the surface. Young athletes learn something every time they step onto the field. It does much more than just keep young bodies in shape and growing at healthy rates. Sports give youth a sense of self-worth and accomplishment and teach them to deal capably with failure and success. It helps them learn the ways of the world the benefits of hard work and determination and how to coexist with others to achieve a common goal even with other team members they may not particularly like! It allows youth to find a role they can fill then to change or adapt to that role and over time to grow and redefine who they are and who they will become. These are all traits that can be extremely useful in the real world and developing such traits at an early age paves the way for success later in life.

To work or not to work That is the question

1 There are numerous and reliable ways by which one can measure the impact of employment on student achievement and we used several in our research. We compared the grades of students who work a great deal with those who work in limited amounts or not at all. We also contrasted workers with non-workers on different indicators of their commitment to education. Additionally we followed students over time as they increased or decreased their work hours and we assessed how different patterns of employment altered school performance and engagement.

2 We have simplified and classified the data and the results are clear: The stakes are high. A heavy commitment to a part-time job during the academic year say working 20 hours per week or more undermines and significantly interferes with school achievement and commitment. Overall our study offers proof that students who worked more than 20 hours weekly were not comparable to their classmates. They earned lower grades spent less time on homework cut class more often and cheated more frequently. And they reported lower levels of commitment to school and more modest educational aspirations.

3 On the other hand we also detected a different pattern. Working for approximately 10 hours per week or less seemingly does not take a consistent toll on school performance. Nevertheless given that half of all employed seniors about one-third of all juniors and about one-fifth of all second-year students work above the 20-hourlimit indications are that a large number of students are at risk of compromising their school careers with their part-time jobs.

4 Whereas it is true that more disengaged students are more likely to work long hours to begin with it appears that working makes a marginal situation worse. In other words over time the more students work the less committed to school they become. When students withdraw from the labor force or cut back on their work hours however the results are striking: Their interest in school is generated anew. This then is good news:The negative effects of working on schooling are not permanent.

5 We uncovered numerous explanations for the undesirable effects of working on students' engagement in school. First owing to their demanding work schedule working students have less time to devote to school assignments. One common response to this time pressure is that they cut corners by taking easier classes copying assignments from other students cutting class or refusing to do work assigned by their teachers. Over time as these become established practices students' commitment to school is eroded bit by bit.

6 Second in order to work 20 hours or more each week many students must work evenings. Evening work interferes not only with doing homework but with both sleep and diet. Studies show that working students get less rest and eat less healthy meals than non-working students. Burning the midnight oil makes working teenagers more tired in school. Teachers frequently complain about working students falling asleep in class. Nearly a third of the students in our study said they were frequently too tired from work to do their homework.

7 Third it appears that the excitement of earning large amounts of spending money makes school seem less rewarding and interesting. Although mind-wandering during school is characteristic of young adults working students report significantly more of it than non-workers. Indeed the rush from earning and spending money may be so strong that students who have a history of intensive employment those who for example have been working long hours since their second year are actually at greater risk than their classmates of dropping out before graduating.

8 Finally working long hours can be associated with increased alcohol and drug use. Working students use drugs and alcohol about 33% more often than non-working students. Our long-term study shows that working long hours leads to increased alcohol and drug use for entertainment and recreation among working students. Teenagers with between $200 and $300 of monthly surplus income frequently have more money to spend than their peers and often they become accustomed to spending their earnings on drugs and alcohol. According to our study alcohol and drug use in turn may be linked to disengagement from school and therefore is likely to depress school performance.

9 To summarize convention has long held that early employment builds character. Our findings indicate that for many students working 20 hours or more a week can contribute to decreased school performance and increased drug and alcohol use. We know that these findings may seem controversial to many. To our own surprise our findings make us question how long we have held on to the conventional assumptions about the great value of work in our formative years. It's time to abandon this appealing myth! We conclude that students should resolve to work no more than 10 hours per week if they want to be successful in school.

Earn as you learn?

1 As the cost of attending university has soared over the last two decades a frank and vigorous debate is emerging over who should pay for the cost of higher education. While in some countries students have always been expected to absorb part or even all of their tuition costs through work or borrowing in other countries the tremendous cost of attending university has been provided by the relevant education authority or by parents. I am proud to be in the small minority of students who "earn as they learn" and absorb the cost of their own university education in spite of the many obstacles.

2 As for the remaining majority I ask myself "Is it me or are students these days just lazy?" Collectively they claim that they have no capacity to pay for college. I think it's more a matter of them simply not wanting to pay or contribute. During college I consistently endured comments from peers with scholarships and loans and peers who had new cars and expensive apartments who would ask me eyes bulging "You mean your parents didn't help you at all?""How did you pay for tuition?" My response was simple: "I worked." They would look at me blankly as though I had told them I'd gone to the moon.

3 As an undergraduate student I worked for two solid years as a day care provider earning minimum wage. Then I paid for the rest of my education by helping deaf children and working as a tutor in a private school. Looking back I'm not sure how I managed to cover all the costs of my education. But I did. And I bought every single textbook and pencil myself too.

4 Sometimes I did feel a little sorry for myself especially when I compared myself to wealthy students. I once asked another student if she worked. "Oh no!" she said startled "I go to school full-time." She was taking only 13 credit hours and yet was "too busy" to work. She went on to explain that her parents paid for everything and provided her with every necessity and many luxuries too!

5 Truthfully I was a little envious of her easy life as I took 18 credit hours so that I could graduate within four years. Besides I was working 25 hours a week so I could pay tuition without future loan debt. And here's something amazing: I pulled straight A's and was at the top of my class!

6 One day I caught a glimpse of that same girl's report card at the end of the term. She pulled C's and a few B's low grades which didn't surprise me. Having to work hard and multitask forces you to prioritize a skill she hadn't learned.

7 I am aware that my work and study choices are not popular and that many influential studies claim to illustrate that working while going to school negatively impacts educational performance. They cite increased dropout rates lower scores and reduced lifetime earnings. Besides these studies also give evidence that many students exhaust much of their earnings not on school but on entertainment and partying while attending school. The studies also show increased abuse of alcohol and drugs which leads me to question these students' resolve and commitment to the serious side of life.

8 For me one of the most authentic benefits of the "earn-as-you-learn" approach is that upon graduation I was free from the substantial stress and tension of debt payments that make so many people worried and uneasy. Relieved of this considerable burden I am convinced that I will be able to make intelligent career choices that will provide me with greater personal satisfaction and ensure better pay over the years to come.

9 The central questions of this debate are: "What is the major purpose of attending university?" and "Who should be responsible for the cost?" For me the answer has always been that my purpose is to get a formal education with an advanced degree and that the responsibility is my own. I understand that some will disagree with my singular approach to educational funding. But consider this the path I have chosen has massive educational financial and psychological benefits!

10 I am particularly proud that in choosing this path of self-support I have relieved my parents of the burden of my university education. Furthermore by taking care of myself without their assistance I have given them the satisfaction of knowing that they successfully completed the task of raising me into adulthood.

11 I will readily concede that it's not always fun. It's not! But with acceptance that you will pay your own way you will grow and mature and learn important skills that will serve you all your life. Want to know a successful path to a happy and sustainable life? Consider joining the ranks of those of us who "earn as they learn"!

When honesty disappears

1 "Is anybody truly honest?" As numerous accounts of cheating lying and fraud crowd our newspaper pages and TV news it seems that honesty is a rapidly vanishing value. And the reports indicate that around the globe corruption and dishonesty are so widespread that the health and well-being of society are at risk. These reports include stories such as the students who faced criminal charges for selling in advance copies of a university final exam a student who was expelled when he turned in a term paper with the purchase receipt for it still inside the pages and a clerk who ran his own Christmas cards through the office postage meter and was found out when he sent one of the cards to the company treasurer! We have all read or heard accounts such as these not to mention the stories of dishonesty amongst all layers of society as exemplified by consumers who steal and politicians who demand bribes. Travelers ripped off so many towels last year that it cost a major hotel chain $3 million to replace them. Especially troubling are the reports that dishonesty is increasing amongst student populations around the world.

2 But are these reports truly accurate or do they exaggerate the situation? Should we be alarmed by these accounts of falling standards of principles and morality? The assumption is that student dishonesty is more extensive now than it was 20 50 100 years ago. If so what's behind it? If this is indeed the case it's deeply troubling as today's students are tomorrow's leaders! It's possible that the desire to cheat is no greater than in the past. However the critical importance of having a university degree may have increased the pressure to cheat in academic environments. Undoubtedly modern technology facilitates the means and opportunities to cheat. The demanding task of writing term papers has always been a source of tense nerves and frustration if not the ultimate homework nightmare. But now with Internet access illegal resources are just a few links away.

3 Modern students who want to fake a term paper don't have to browse long. They only have to locate the appropriate website purchase or order online papers or even download them for free. One web service offers "highest quality papers at the lowest possible prices" only $5.95 per page. Busy cost-conscious students will find other "low-priced" term papers on websites that promise consumers "You will be happy and successful." Some people worry that the Internet once hailed as the ultimate learning tool could become the best aid yet for cheating.

4 To cope with the growing plague of cheating universities around the world now use anti-plagiarism software and have very strict cheating and plagiarism policies. If students are caught plagiarizing or cheating in any way they will be immediately expelled from school. Some college faculty decided to do more than talk about rising student cheating. Professors at a major university launched a campaign to try to eliminate one form of cheating. As 409 students filed out of their Introduction to Psychology exam they found all but one exit blocked. Test monitors asked each student to produce an ID card with an attached photo. If they provided a satisfactory ID they were fine. If they had left their ID at home the officials confronted them and took their picture. The purpose of the campaign was to reveal hired cheaters students who take tests for other students. The majority of students at the university applauded the new strategy.

5 With awareness of increasing dishonesty in today's society it's sometimes implied that in "the good old days" people were better happier and more honest. Were they more honest? Maybe yes maybe no. Long ago all American schoolchildren knew the historical story of how Abraham Lincoln walked five miles to return a penny he had overcharged a customer. It's the kind of story that we think of as myth. But in the case of Lincoln the story is true.

6 Like the Lincoln tale every society has stories stressing the absolute value of honesty. It is these stories that students need to remember when temptation induces them to cheat. Whether discovered or not dishonesty has an undesirable effect on anyone who practices it. Equally importantly the ill effects are not confined to the dishonest person alone. Without trust ordered societies would descend into chaos. It's important that we do what we say we will do pay when we say we will and create words that are our own. Perhaps the most important lesson our schools can teach is that we must trust each other. When honesty disappears the affirmative durable bonds of trust are eliminated and we all lose. The future of our society depends on mutual trust.

Rays of Hope in Rising Rudeness

1 Rudeness is a common element of modern life. "If you don't like it, lump it." Or "Mind your own business." Or "Get out of the way." This kind of talk and attitude is cropping up more often in public experiences — on the highways, in theater lines, on public transport. Whether it is people smoking in public, or people cutting in line, the examples are almost endless.

2 It is generally thought around the world that the inhabitants of large cities are ruder than their fellow citizens from smaller towns or the countryside. Walk down streets of any major capital around the world and you will encounter taxi drivers who believe a "Walk" sign at a walkway is an automatic invitation to bump their cars against pedestrians' knees. Recently, an angry pedestrian reacted by kicking a cab, prompting the driver to get out and give chase. And hardly a day goes by without a reluctant office worker riding an elevator with someone talking loudly on the cell phone, despite the obvious disturbance to fellow passengers. "If you don't like it, get out and switch to another elevator," one cell phone user recently told another passenger who objected to his loud voice. In New York and other cities, quiet walks are a thing of the past. Who is to blame? The cell phone users talking loudly as well as the annoying drivers behind beeping car horns. In some big cities, subway terminals are bulging with herds of commuters, elbowing their way to grab seats, intimidating the old, the young, the disabled and the pregnant. It's common to hear people on the bus or subway talking on their cell phones very loudly, being a nuisance to those around them.

3 What can we detect about such incidents? Some experts say the trend began decades ago when people became resistant to traditional values and manners. Others blame fast-paced modern lifestyles for contributing to a society that has little time to be polite. This is particularly true in big cities, where people are surrounded by strangers. As a noted psychologist has observed, "In a small town, the person to whom you are rude is more likely to be someone you are going to see again tomorrow." In the city, if you have a minor conflict, it's very unlikely you will ever encounter that person again.

4 Stress also plays a role in incidents of ignorant behavior. Cindy Kludt, a counselor who works with overworked nurses, says rudeness in hospitals corresponds with the stress of people constantly working under life-and-death circumstances. "If people at the top are rude or uncaring, rudeness moves on downward, affecting everyone's behavior."

5 Rudeness comes with stress and this is becoming strikingly common. Motorists regularly force bicyclists off the road, and large trucks intimidate autos moving too slowly in front of them. Disgraceful insults are shouted and even bottles and trash are thrown at road crews by upset drivers because lanes are restricted.

6 Public officials are often the target of people's frustration. Staff assistants in public institutions tell of rude, hostile, and sometimes threatening words from people who feel government agencies are rude or mistreating them. As rudeness in public dealings cuts both ways, citizens perceive that public servants habitually ignore them, and they in turn treat the public servants in an offensive fashion.

7 Sometimes, such behavior goes beyond verbal abuse. A worker in a restaurant was slapped and cursed by a customer after she told him no table would be available for two hours. A man in the United States recently won damages for injuries suffered when he made a complaint about a woman for using bad language in her loud conversation. After being told to "get lost", he was beaten with an umbrella by the woman and punched by her companion. Utility crews in big cities report increasing violence from people who have complaints against the power company. "Our repair crews have a rough time in some apartment houses where a lot of people live with relatively little space," says a utility company executive. "That makes short tempers, and angry, rude behavior shows up."

8 There is disagreement as to whether the situation is improving or not. Many see little hope for a decline in today's rude behavior. In fact, some see a new pattern emerging in big cities — the "norm of non-involvement" as one psychologist calls it. Others are feeling more hopeful. For example, one international organization, the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, inspires people to practice kindness and to pass it on to others! The organization points to a variety of indicators showing kinder and more compassionate citizens. More people are volunteering their time for community projects; also, donations of goods and money to charities have increased. These acts of kindness would have a positive effect on others and would help to reduce the stress in society. Let's hope this optimistic view prevails and brings a better, brighter world for us all.

Gender variables in friendship: Contradiction or not?

1 When I think of my good friends, I see them in cinematic terms. The camerawork is entirely different for men and women. The "movie" memories I have of female friends are open and intimate. We are talking, interested in each other in a magnetic sort of way. They look straight into my eyes, sensitive to my feelings, listening to me with deliberate attention. In comparison, memories of male friends are in an entirely different film altogether. An action or adventure movie! Not much in the way of dialog. The ritual of motion, or the sequence of action, makes up for the deficiency of dialog and honest narrative.

2 My mind retreats back to my earliest childhood friend, Donald. I was still living in Europe at the time, and near my house was an old German truck left abandoned after the war. No wheels. No windshield. No doors. But the steering wheel was intact. Donald and I continuously "flew" to America in that truck, our "airplane". Even now, I remember our daily ritual as we flew along, across Europe, across the Atlantic, on a mission of mercy. We were innocent and inseparable, the deep security that comes between best friends. Naturally, not one word of our evident feelings for one another was ever uttered; it was all done in actions.

3 Each day, as we were flying over the Atlantic, there inevitably came that wonderful moment: "Engine failure!" I'd shout into the microphone, "We'll have to jump out.""A-a-a-a-a-!" Donald made sounds like a failing engine. Glancing at me, he'd say, "I can't swim!""Fear not! I'll drag you to shore," I'd bravely reply. And, with that, we'd both spill out of the truck onto the dusty street. I swam through the dust. Donald drowned in the dust, coughing, "Sharks!" he cried. But I always saved him. The next day, changing roles, the elaborate drama would repeat. "I can't swim!" I'd say and Donald would save me. We saved each other from certain death hundreds of times, until finally a day came when my family really did leave for America. Donald and I stood rigid at the train station ready to say farewell. We didn't know what to say; we couldn't save each other this time. So, we just cried silently as the train pulled away.

4 These days, Jessica is one of my best friends. A recent occurrence made me reexamine and interpret my behavior in a new light. We were swimming at a beach in the Atlantic. The very Atlantic I had "flown" over in my German truck with Donald. We were far from shore when we abruptly turned back. We both thought we detected a shark! Water is not only a good conductor of electricity but of panic as well. We began splashing like crazy people toward the shore. In my panic, I suddenly realized how much I loved my friend Jessica, and what an irreplaceable friend she was. Although I was the faster swimmer, I fell back to protect her. In the end, the "shark" proved to be imaginary. But not my deep emotional feelings for my friend. It felt great back on the beach, a little scared and laughing with the excitement of being alive. We looked into each other's eyes and Jessica spontaneously said, "I love you!""Love you too!" I replied.

5 As I spoke, I realized just how gender-based my communication styles were. With women, I could be open, emotionally honest, and transparent. With male friends, it seemed impossible to express caring feelings no matter how deep the friendship was. I could easily utter "I love you" to my mother, my sisters and girlfriends; yet not once in my life had I been able to look a male friend in the eye and say the same thing. Quite impossible! Was this just me or was every male in the world similarly cursed? Was I emotionally backward or just a "guy"? I was determined to find out!

6 Much to my relief, research shows that I am, indeed, a "normal guy". It seems that men and women have very different emotional and rational processes. Part of it is "nature" and part is "nurture". We are born with very different genetic tendencies which society encourages as either "masculine" or "feminine". These differences in behavior and communication styles were made famous by John Gray in his book Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus. This book and other articles helped me realize it's OK I am the way that I am. Men do tend to be more restrained with emotional expressions. I learned that I did love all my friends — only the means of expression differs from one gender to the other. What a relief!

Similarities and difference: Friendship across cultures

1 Since I was five years old, I have had the good fortune to travel all over the world. I have had the privilege of living in Europe, Africa and North America and have made many foreign friends there. My family, friends, and co-workers are always very interested and curious and shower me with questions like: How do you begin a friendship in a foreign country? Are they different from us? Do people in those countries value friendship? In fact, the framework and value of friendship is universal and comparable around the world. But the way friendship is expressed differs greatly from country to country. The difficulty when strangers from two countries meet is not a lack of appreciation for friendship but the assumption of sameness. They do not anticipate the diverse expectations and subtle differences of what constitutes friendship, how it comes into being and how it should be expressed. So, who is a friend? How should friends treat each other? That depends on where you are!

2 In the United States, society is highly mobile and it is quite common for people to move back and forth across the country for a new job, education, or many other reasons. The term friend can be applied casually to a wide range of relationships — to someone you worship with, to a close business associate, to a childhood playmate, or a trusted ally, either man or woman. They may be parents of the children's friends, a neighbor's guests, members of a committee, or business clients from another town or even another country. For Americans, there are real differences among these relations; a friendship may be superficial, casual, situational or deep and enduring. But a foreign visitor who comes to an American home can scarcely find any variations. For an outsider, who sees only behavior visible on the surface, the differences seem arbitrary if they find any. The mood is relaxed, and there is little ceremony. Most people, old and young, are called by first names and family and friends alike interact freely and speak in a relaxed, casual way.

3 Comparatively, friendship in other countries seems more complicated. In France, as in many other European countries, friends generally are of the same sex. Many French people doubt the possibility of cross-gender friendships. For the French, friendship is a one-to-one relationship that demands a keen awareness of the other person's personality and specialized interests. The special relationship of friendship is based on what the French value most – on the mind, on compatibility of outlook, on a corresponding appreciation of artistic expression, on a love of fine foods, on philosophy, or on the enjoyment of sports. French friendships are private relationships with distinct boundaries. A man may play chess with one friend or discuss poetry with another for 30 years without learning about either of his friends' personal lives or families.

4 In Germany, friendship is much more a matter of feeling and affection. Young boys and girls form deeply sensitive alliances, walk and talk together – not so much to polish their wits as to share their hopes, fears, and ideals, and to join in a kind of mutual discovery of each other's own inner life. Within the family, the closest relationship over a lifetime is between brothers and sisters. German men and women find in their closest friends among the same sex the loyalty of a brother or the devotion of a sister.

5 English friendships follow a still different pattern. Their basis is shared activity. They may share literary interests, serve on a committee, enjoy sports together or share a mutual love of walking. Close English friendships may be of the same sex or of mixed gender; friends may be found in two people, two couples or even a small group. English friendships are made outside the family but can often be enhanced by becoming an integrated part of a family's social life.

6 What, then, is friendship and what is its significance? To summarize, it's a vital human quality that can bind people together for life. And unlike family, it involves freedom of choice. A friend is someone you choose and who chooses you. My friends are quite different from each other. Some are mutual friends. Conversely, others don't even like each other! That is the odd thing about friendship. Just because I like two people does not guarantee that they will like each other. However, I owe them all a debt of gratitude. Whatever the continent or country, people have extended the hand of friendship and welcomed me into their lives. By opening the doors of friendship to me, they occupy a special place in my heart. They have profoundly enriched my life experience, because wherever I am, when I'm with friends, I feel at home. The miracle of friendship is the same. It just takes time to understand the many different ways that friendship is expressed around the world.

第二册

An impressive English lesson

1 If I am the only parent who still corrects his child's English then perhaps my son is right. To him I am a tedious oddity: a father he is obliged to listen to and a man absorbed in the rules of grammar which my son seems allergic to.

2 I think I got serious about this only recently when I ran into one of my former students fresh from an excursion to Europe. "How was it?" I asked full of earnest anticipation.

3 She nodded three or four times searched the heavens for the right words and then exclaimed "It was like whoa!"

4 And that was it. The civilization of Greece and the glory of Roman architecture were captured in a condensed non-statement. My student's "whoa!" was exceeded only by my head-shaking distress.

5 There are many different stories about the downturn in the proper use of English. Surely students should be able to distinguish between their/there/they're or the distinctive difference between complimentary and complementary. They unfairly bear the bulk of the criticism for these knowledge deficits because there is a sense that they should know better.

their/there/theyrecomplimentarycomplementary

6 Students are not dumb but they are being misled everywhere they look and listen. For example signs in grocery stores point them to the stationary even though the actual stationery items pads albums and notebooks are not nailed down. Friends and loved ones often proclaim they've just ate when in fact they've just eaten. Therefore it doesn't make any sense to criticize our students.

stationary（）stationery () Theyve just ate Theyve just eaten

7 Blame for the scandal of this language deficit should be thrust upon our schools which should be setting high standards of English language proficiency. Instead they only teach a little grammar and even less advanced vocabulary. Moreover the younger teachers themselves evidently have little knowledge of these vital structures of language because they also went without exposure to them. Schools fail to adequately teach the essential framework of language accurate grammar and proper vocabulary while they should take the responsibility of pushing the young onto the path of competent communication.

8 Since grammar is boring to most of the young students I think that it must be handled delicately step by step. The chance came when one day I was driving with my son. As we set out on our trip he noticed a bird in jerky flight and said "It's flying so unsteady." I carefully asked "My son how is the bird flying?""What's wrong? Did I say anything incorrectly?" He got lost. "Great! You said incorrectly instead of incorrect. We use adverbs to describe verbs. Therefore it's flying so unsteadily but not so unsteady."

（Its flying so unsteady.） ?（Did I say anything incorrectly?）incorrectlyincorrectunsteadily unsteady

9 Curious about my correction he asked me what an adverb was. Slowly I said "It's a word that tells you something about a verb." It led to his asking me what a verb was. I explained "Verbs are action words; for example Dad drives the truck. Drive is the verb because it's the thing Dad is doing."

10 He became attracted to the idea of action words so we listed a few more: fly swim dive run. Then out of his own curiosity he asked me if other words had names for their use and functions. This led to a discussion of nouns adjectives and articles. Within the span of a 10-minute drive he had learned from scratch to the major parts of speech in a sentence. It was painless learning and great fun!

11 Perhaps language should be looked upon as a road map and a valuable possession: often study the road map (check grammar) and tune up the car engine (adjust vocabulary). Learning grammar and a good vocabulary is just like driving with a road map in a well-conditioned car.

12 The road map provides the framework and guidance you need for your trip but it won't tell you exactly what trees or flowers you will see what kind of people you will encounter or what types of feelings you will be experiencing on your journey. Here the vocabulary makes the journey's true colors come alive! A good vocabulary enables you to enjoy whatever you see as you drive along. Equipped with grammar and a good vocabulary you have flexibility and excellent control. While the road map guides your journey to your destination an excellent vehicle helps you to fully enjoy all of the sights sounds and experiences along the way.

13 Effective precise and beneficial communication depends upon grammar and a good vocabulary the two essential assets for students but they are not being taught in schools.

14 Just this morning my son and I were eating breakfast when I attempted to add milk to my tea. "Dad" he said "If I were you I wouldn't do that. It's sour."

（If I were you I wouldnt do that. Its sour.）

15 "Oh my!" I said swelling with pride toward my son "That's a grammatically perfect sentence. You used were instead of was."

were was

16 "I know I know" he said with a long agreeable sigh. "It's the subjunctive mood."

17 I was like whoa!

The great journey of learning

1 Malcolm X was an African-American civil rights activist religious leader writer and speaker. Born in 1925 he was mysteriously assassinated in 1965. By the time of his death his own telling of his life story The Autobiography of Malcolm X had been widely known. He was born Malcolm Little into a poor household. Later he took the name Malcolm X after joining an organization called the Nation of Islam a religious group that had changed major practices and beliefs of mainstream Islam to apply more specifically to the condition of African-American people in the United States in the early 1960s.

2 Malcolm X learned about the Nation of Islam while in prison for committing criminal acts such as theft. Because he was poorly educated he felt inadequate to teach his new beliefs to others. As a young man he could sketch his thoughts with poor grammar and little vocabulary using the simple unsophisticated language of people on the street. As an adult when he tried to inform people about his new beliefs at a rally he found that he didn't have the adequate communication skills he needed. In his own words he "wasn't even functional".

3 In a bid to increase his knowledge and improve his skills desperate Malcolm X devised a scheme. He turned to books believing this would be beneficial. However when he tried to read serious books on his own he was distressed as he didn't know most of the words. "They might as well have been in Chinese" he wrote. He skipped all the words he didn't know and then would end up with no clue as to what the book was about. "I became frustrated" Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography speaking of his inadequate language skills.

4 Malcolm X's considerable frustration at his inability to read and write launched him on a quest to overcome his deficiencies. He said "I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary to study to learn some words." And he was lucky enough to reason also that he should try to improve his handwriting. "It was sad. I couldn't even write in a straight line" he told us. These ideas together moved him to appeal to the prison authorities for some paper and pencils.

5 For the first two days Malcolm X just skimmed through the pages of the dictionary trying to negotiate his way through its unfamiliar format. He told us of his amazement at how closely related the words seemed. How moist could be the root of moisture and advisable and advisory had the same root word! "I didn't know which words I needed to learn" he said "finally just to start some kind of action I began copying." In his slow careful crude handwriting Malcolm X copied everything on the first full page of the dictionary into a notebook. He even copied the quotation marks! This took him one full day. After that he read everything he had written aloud. "Over and over aloud to myself I read my own handwriting." Malcolm recalled. He also logged important things that happened every day. Repetition helped move him from basic literacy toward true proficiency.

6 Malcolm X depicted how the next morning when he woke up he kept thinking about the words he had copied and read aloud and about the acquisition of the knowledge he was pursuing. It was a marvelous feeling. He felt immensely proud.

7 He was so fascinated that he went on copying the dictionary's next page. Once again he awoke proud and energized. With every succeeding page he copied and read aloud Malcolm X found he was learning and remembering more and more words. With each successive day his confusion diminished.

8 As Malcolm X's word base broadened he began to better understand the books he read. It was the first time in his life this had ever happened "Anyone who has read a great deal can imagine the new world that opened." From then until he left that prison his concentration was focused on reading. He was so absorbed in it. Months passed without his even thinking about being in prison. "In fact up to then I never had been so truly free in my life."

9 "I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life" Malcolm X wrote. He described how one day a writer telephoned him from London for an interview. The interviewer asked Malcolm X what college he had graduated from as he could write so fluently. He told the Englishman that his own personal university was "books".

10 Malcolm X's life is a wonderful example of the profound effect of learning a language. He was born into a world full of poverty and ignorance. However as he acquired knowledge his horizons expanded. He had left behind the narrow ignorant world of his youth to join the world community of thoughts and actions ever since he started with his great journey of learning English in prison.

The humanities: Out of date?

1 When the going gets tough the tough take accounting. When the job market worsens many students calculate they can't major in English or history. They have to study something that boosts their prospects of landing a job.

2 The data show that as students have increasingly shouldered the ever-rising cost of tuition they have defected from the study of the humanities and toward applied science and "hard" skills that they bet will lead to employment. In other words a college education is more and more seen as a means for economic betterment rather than a means for human betterment. This is a trend that is likely to persist and even accelerate.

3 Over the next few years as labor markets struggle the humanities will probably continue their long slide in succession. There already has been a nearly 50 percent decline in the portion of liberal arts majors over the past generation and it is logical to think that the trend is bound to continue or even accelerate. Once the dominant pillars of university life the humanities now play little roles when students take their college tours. These days labs are more vivid and compelling than libraries.

4 Here please allow me to stand up for and promote the true value that the humanities add to people's lives. Since ancient times people have speculated about the mystery of those inner forces that drive some people to greatness and others to self-destruction. This inner drive has been called many things over the centuries. The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud called it the "unconscious mind" or more familiarly "instinct".

5 From the beginning of time this inner aspect of our being this drive that can be constructive or destructive has captured our imagination. The stories of this amazing struggle have formed the basis of cultures the world over. Historians architects authors philosophers and artists have captured the words images and meanings of this inner struggle in the form of story music myth painting architecture sculpture landscape and traditions. These men and women developed artistic "languages" that help us understand these aspirations and also educate generations. This fertile body of work from ancient times the very foundation of civilization forms the basis of study of the humanities.

6 Studying the humanities improves our ability to read and write. No matter what we do in life we will have a huge advantage if we can read complex ideas and understand their meaning. We will have a bright career if we are the person in the office who can write a clear and elegant analysis of those ideas!

7 Studying the humanities makes us familiar with the language of emotion and the creative process. In an information economy many people have the ability to produce a useful product such as a new MP3 player. Yet very few people have the ability to create a spectacular brand: the iPod. Most importantly studying the humanities invests us with great insight and self-awareness thereby releasing our creative energy and talent in a positive and constructive manner.

8 Perhaps the best argument in favor of the humanities is the scope of possibilities that are widely open to us. Did you know that James Cameron world-famous director of the movie Titanic graduated with a degree in the humanities? So did Sally Ride the first woman in space. So did actors Bruce Lee Gwyneth Paltrow Renee Zellweger and Matt Damon. Dr. Harold Varmus who won a Nobel Prize for Medicine studied the humanities. Even Michael Eisner Chairman of the Disney Company majored in the humanities. Famous people who studied the humanities make a long list indeed. It's easy to see that the humanities can prepare us for many different careers and jobs we can undertake whether medicine business science or entertainment. If we study only mathematics it's likely we will be a candidate only for jobs as a mathematician. If we include studying the humanities we can make breakthroughs on many barriers and are limited only by our effort and imagination.

9 Of course nowadays if we study the humanities alone we are liable to miss many opportunities. Each one of us needs to become as technically and professionally skilled as possible to help meet the needs of modern life. In fact increasingly a pairing of technical knowledge and inner insight is seen as the ideal in the establishment of a career. If I were the Dean of Admissions at a medical school and two people applied to our school both having the required basic scientific courses one a philosophy major and the other solely a pre-med student the philosophy applicant would be chosen.

10 In summary the humanities help to create well-rounded human beings with insight and understanding of the passions hopes and dreams common to all humanity. The humanities the ancient timeless reservoir of knowledge teach us to see things differently and broaden our horizons. They are as useful and relevant in our modern age as they have always been. Doesn't it make sense to spend some time in the company of the humanities our outstanding and remarkable treasure of knowledge? Who knows how famous YOU might become!

What college brings us?

1 The case for college has been accepted without question for more than a generation. There has been a general consensus that all high school graduates ought to go to college because college will help them get a job earn more money become "better" people and learn to be more responsible citizens than those who don't go. However given the huge cost of attending a university and the shrinking job market should we not re-examine the case for college?

2 The reality is that college has never been magical for everyone. Now that close to half our high school graduates are attending college those who don't fit the pattern are becoming more numerous. Excess college graduates are selling shoes and driving taxis.

3 Some adventuresome educators and campus watchers have openly begun to suggest that we revise our attitudes and reform the system. College may not be the best the proper or even realistic place for every young person after the completion of high school. Critics suggest we may have been looking at all those surveys and statistics upside down through the rosy glow of our own remembered college experiences.

4 Many students confirm that they feel compelled to go to college because of pressure from parents and teachers and stay there because it seems to be an alternative to a far worse fate. They quiver at the thought of the army or a dead-end job and almost anything is better than staying at home. Potential college graduates say that they don't want to work "solely for the money" and that they want to do work that matters. Their motive is to help people and save the world but the numbers are stacked against them. Not only are there not sufficient jobs in the world-saving fields but in the current slowdown it has become evident that there never are enough promising jobs presumably never will be that require a higher education.

5 Let's acknowledge the facts. The New York Times reports close to 80 percent of new jobs can be performed by someone without a college degree. The US Department of Education estimates that only 62 percent of those enrolled in four-year institutions had earned a bachelor's degree six years later! This dilemma means that 38 percent have likely wasted time and accumulated debt! In addition in the US the cost of college has risen tenfold over the last 30 years a ratio that is three times as much as general inflation over the same time period. It is clear from an objective point of view that many more students should be attending technical schools or two-year colleges to prepare for the jobs that will actually be available to them.

6 Of course for many jobs a higher education is absolutely necessary and required. So for some people obtaining a bachelor's degree is but the first step of lifelong learning. For them a university degree is essential.

7 There is little doubt that attending college has the potential of exposing young people to new ideas and relationships and helps promote their critical thinking skills. It also accords them a relatively safe environment for experimentation and exploration. Nevertheless many college graduates report that what they learned on campus was better described as personal rather than academic development. Likewise they report that the real value of college has more to do with developing their identity and practicing social skills than anything to do with the college curriculum. If you accept that the prime reason for going to college is to provide a period for pure learning and maturation of a young person the decision is made easy as it becomes a question of affordability for the individual student.

8 Whatever college graduates want to do most of them are going to have to adjust. During the upcoming years according to the US Department of Labor the biggest demand will be for jobs that do not need a university degree. Those students who have gone to college to become urban planners editors and college professors will have a hard time to find jobs related to what they have learned. They may well find that the only jobs available are sales agents carpenters mechanics or cable installers. In fact having a university degree may be a barrier to getting these jobs. On the other hand students who have graduated in specialized fields often find that they have learned a lot of things in classrooms that they will never use. One gloomy architecture student who had already designed and built houses said "I don't want to appear cynical. It's more the degree you need not the breadth of knowledge you learn getting it."

9 College is an outstanding place for that rare breed those young adults who love learning for its own sake who would literally rather read than bother to eat and who like nothing better than writing research papers. But they are a minority even at the famous colleges which attract and recruit the intellectually oriented.

10 In brief our high school graduates need to evaluate the college equation more closely and critically calculate it as a consumer product and decide if the value proposal is worth the very large investment each student and family must make.

Journey through the odyssey years

1 Most of us know about the phases of life which we label to parallel different age groups and life stages: childhood adolescence adulthood and old age. We think of infancy before childhood and middle age before old age with each unique phase bringing its own peculiar set of challenges. These challenges can be overcome by acquainting ourselves with them such as the child's need to learn the adult's need to find the right career and build a family and the senior's need for support and good health care.

2 Interestingly ideas about the stages of life are changing.

3 In previous times people didn't have a solid idea of childhood as being separate from adulthood. A hundred years ago no one thought of adolescence. Until recently it was understood as a norm that their induction to adulthood was completed as soon as they graduated from college. They would now find a sensible job which would lead to a career. Then during this career they would start a family ideally before they turned 30.

4 Today we have an equivalent need to recognize a new phase of life that comes after high school graduation continues through college and then leads to starting a family and having a career the so-called odyssey years. Recent trends show radical changes as young people are following a different agenda. They take breaks from school live with friends and often return to living with their parents. Similarly they fall in and out of love quit one job and try another or even shift to a new career. So we need to recognize this new stage the odyssey years which many now consider to be an unavoidable stage in reaching adulthood.

5 People who were born prior to the 60s or 70s in the last century tended to frame their concept of adulthood based upon achieving certain accomplishments: moving away from home becoming financially independent finding the right spouse and starting a family. But that emphasis on stability did not remain static. Today young people are unlikely to do the same. During the odyssey years a high proportion of young people are delaying marriage child bearing and even employment.

6 The odyssey years can saddle young people with enormous pressure to move forward quickly. As the sole heir and focus of their parents' expectations hopes and dreams some react with rebellious and prideful attitudes and behavior toward their parents. They often resent the pressure they're feeling and keep a distance from their parents or even run away from home. Their confusion comes from the difficulties to make parents understand them and the fluid journey of discovery they need in this phase of their lives. To get away from this confusion and upset many young people resort to computer games iPod iPhone or iPad to help distract them from their pain and stress.

7 Likewise their parents are feeling more anxious. They may make allowances for a transition phase from student life to adult life but they get upset when they see the transition of their grown children's lives moving away from their expectations and stretching five years to seven years and beyond. The parents don't even detect a clear sense of direction in their children's lives. They look at them and see the things that are being delayed.

8 It's hard to predict what's next. New guidelines haven't been established yet and everything seems to give way to a less permanent version of itself. There's been a shift in the status and balance of power between the genders too. More women are getting degrees than men. Male wages have remained stable over the past decades while female wages have boomed.

9 Apart from anything else this has had an implicit effect on courtship. Educated women can get many of the things they want such as security accomplishment and identity without marriage. However both genders are having a harder time finding suitable mates to build their lives with. Considering all of this it's beneficial to know that even though graduates are delaying many things after college surveys show they still hold highly traditional aspirations. For example this contemporary generation rates parenthood even more highly than previous generations did!

10 This new phase will likely grow more pronounced in the coming years. Nations around the world have witnessed similar trends toward delaying marriage and spending more years than ever shifting between higher education and settling down with a career and family.

11 Nevertheless graduates shouldn't be deceived into thinking they can back off simply because things have become more difficult. A large number of people chasing relatively fewer opportunities can create strong competitive pressure. So from the outset keep your résumé professional and up-to-date.

12 To reinforce this essential message success moving through the odyssey years will come to those who don't expect to achieve their goals right away but know that they must have the strength capacity and confidence to endure over the long term. If you're a little late with your goals don't feel like a failure! Stay strong be positive and keep focused! Someday you will look back and wonder at the vast changes as you passed through the odyssey years.

﻿

Finding my way back home

1 "Dear Dad" I wrote "I want to come home from my exile." After many hours of thinking as I sat by the side of a busy highway I tore the page in half and crushed it into a small ball. I'd started this letter many times but would always fall into despair. I wanted to go home home to my parents and sisters but I would always hesitate … I didn't know if it was feasible.

2 I had run away from home after finishing high school. My parents had insisted I go to college; our family code demanded it but I was tired of school. I hated it. I was determined not to go. And besides my father was too strict with me. The allowance he gave me was pitiful. I had multiple jobs to do around the farm. I hated the work finding it hollow and dull! I was miserable.

3 There had been a fight between my father and me. Like a volcano erupting I snapped. I threw some things into a bag and left angrily. My father shouted after me "If you leave don't come back!" My mother cried and I have seen her grief and tears a hundred times during sleepless nights.

4 The letter had to be written.

5 Dear Dad

6 It's been more than a year now. I've traveled east to west. I've had a series of jobs mostly manual labor as a waiter in a banquet hall as a maintenance man in a dairy plant and once as a deck hand on a commercial fishing boat. None of them amounted to very much. Always the same question: "How much education have you got?" They always want college graduates for the good jobs.

7 Dad I want to affirm this: You and Mother were right about everything. I know now that the work on the farm didn't hurt me. I've met many people since I've been away; some were refined and others very coarse. I didn't know what home meant until I'd been away for a few months. My awareness has changed. I'm convinced I can't be away from my family any more.

8 I want to come home and bond with my family again. I'd like to go to college and learn how to be an organic farmer and then if you'll let me maybe I could farm with you.

9 I'm on the road now so you can't answer me by letter. But in a few days I'll be passing by the farm at night. And Dad I'm asking you to allow me to come home to demonstrate that you've forgiven me by leaving the porch light on. If there is no light on I'll resign myself to your decision and just keep on going. I'll understand.

10 Please give my love to Mother and the girls.

11 Love

12 Your son

13 Overnight I tried to sleep on the grass by the road but sleep did not come. I wondered what my little sisters were doing and what wonderful food my mother was cooking.

14 I couldn't bear my restless thoughts any longer. I roused myself and started down the long road home. But was it still my home?

15 A police car stopped and the deputy offered me a ride. It was good to have someone to talk with. "Where're you going son?" he asked. Somehow he reminded me of my own father.

16 A long silence. "Home" I said.

17 "Where have you been?"

18 He seemed truly interested. There was real integrity in his face.

19 "All over" I said.

20 "Been away from home long?"

21 "A year one month and two days." I said.

22 He didn't look at me but he smiled and I knew he understood.

23 "You're a fine boy" he said.

24 Then he told me about his own two sons "My older son ran away from home two years ago – two years and15 days." He looked away and then said "I hope someday somebody will be nice to him too."

25 Two days later I was on the road within 50 miles of home. A big truck with a cargo trailer slowed and stopped. I ran and got in from the heat. The air-conditioning felt good.

26 Somewhat later rain began to fall slowly at first and then hard enough to soak the earth. I drifted off to sleep and woke feeling refreshed.

27 We were nearing my family's farm. I was awake and alert. Would there be a light shining on the porch? It was torture to look and I couldn't bear to do it. Suddenly we were there. I surrendered myself to my fate!

28 The truck driver smiled and said "Look at that would you! Just like in a fairy tale! That house there the one just over there! Four bamboo cane chairs are sitting on the porch with lighted lamps in every one of them and an old man as still as a statue is out there with a flashlight aimed toward the road. AND the porch light is on too!"

College sweethearts

1 I smile at my two lovely daughters and they seem so much more mature than we their parents when we were college sweethearts. Linda who's 21 had a boyfriend in her freshman year she thought she would marry but they're not together anymore. Melissa who's 19 hasn't had a steady boyfriend yet. My daughters wonder when they will meet "The One" their great love. They think their father and I had a classic fairy-tale romance heading for marriage from the outset. Perhaps they're right but it didn't seem so at the time. In a way love just happens when you least expect it. Who would have thought that Butch and I would end up getting married to each other? He became my boyfriend because of my shallow agenda: I wanted a cute boyfriend!

2 We met through my college roommate at the university cafeteria. That fateful night I was merely curious but for him I think it was love at first sight. "You have beautiful eyes" he said as he gazed at my face. He kept staring at me all night long. I really wasn't that interested for two reasons. First he looked like he was a really wild boy maybe even dangerous. Second although he was very cute he seemed a little weird.

3 Riding on his bicycle he'd ride past my dorm as if "by accident" and pretend to be surprised to see me. I liked the attention but was cautious about his wild dynamic personality. He had a charming way with words which would charm any girl. Fear came over me when I started to fall in love. His exciting "bad boy image" was just too tempting to resist. What was it that attracted me? I always had an excellent reputation. My concentration was solely on my studies to get superior grades. But for what? College is supposed to be a time of great learning and also some fun. I had nearly achieved a great education and graduation was just one semester away. But I hadn't had any fun; my life was stale with no component of fun! I needed a boyfriend. Not just any boyfriend. He had to be cute. My goal that semester became: Be ambitious and grab the cutest boyfriend I can find.

4 I worried what he'd think of me. True we lived in a time when a dramatic shift in sexual attitudes was taking place but I was a traditional girl who wasn't ready for the new ways that seemed common on campus. Butch looked superb! I was not immune to his personality but I was scared. The night when he announced to the world that I was his girlfriend I went along with him. And then I suddenly thought: "Oh my gosh! Am I his girlfriend? How did that happen?" Then he whispered sweet words in my ear and said "I'm going to marry you one day and I will be a lawyer. You will see."

5 I was laughing inside and said to myself "I'd never marry this guy. He's a rebel without a good future. He's my boyfriend because I hate my boring student life. I just want to have fun."

6 Sure enough the following month I found out he had failed all his courses. Consequently he was going to be expelled from the university. To my disgust he seemed resigned to his fate. I knew there was hope so I led him to the college secretary for reconsideration.

7 "You are going to graduate with a BA in political science from UPenn and proceed to the College of Law" I told him lodging an appeal on his behalf which was approved. Butch was granted reconsideration. And once we became steadies he coordinated his studies and social life passing all of his classes. He eventually studied law.

8 Despite Butch's somewhat wild character at his core he is always a perfect gentleman and deserves a lot of credit for that. True he'd sometimes take the liberty of displaying his love by planting a kiss on my lips right in front of my astonished friends who watched and disapproved. But the truth is we had a pure and responsible relationship for seven full years. Sitting by the palm trees hand in hand we would listen to romantic songs watch the sunset and weave dreams of being together with children of our own forever.

9 Two years passed in a blur. One day Butch took me by surprise as he knelt down and proposed marriage holding a dozen red roses! Filled with deep emotion I confessed my love for him "How roooomaaaantic!!" Then my brain woke up from fantasy land. I cried out "Good heavens. No! We're too young to tie the knot. We haven't even graduated from college yet!" I really loved him but was pessimistic about our chances for success.

10 We married five years later.

11 Our faithful journey of love and learning took us down rocky roads of hardship and on smooth easy-going highways. It is a long romantic sometimes crazy love story that sums up a 29-year long honeymoon together as a couple who are still madly in love with each other. Our love commenced with a casual attraction but bloomed into a mature love and rich life.

﻿

Saving the date

1 Every day I anxiously wait for you to get to class. I can't wait for us to smile at each other and say good morning. When you arrive only seconds before the lecture commences I'm indifferent to anything but your arrival. Instead of reviewing my lesson I anticipate your footsteps and listen for your voice. Today is one of your late days but I don't mind because after a month of denying the impulse to ask you out today I'm feeling bold. Today I'm inclined to act.

2 I know dating has changed dramatically in recent years and for many women asking men out isn't daring. But because of my traditional upbringing the simple notion of asking you out seems abnormal. Growing up I heard the clear message: Men must take the initiative and make contact. They should call ask and pay for the date. However during my years at the university I've learned otherwise. Many of my women friends have put a spark in their social lives by taking the initiative with men. My girlfriends reckon that it's essential for women to participate more actively in the dating process. "I can't be idle and wait" my former roommate once said. "Hard as it is if I want to date I have to ask guys out!"

3 More women are taking the initiative and invite men out and many men say they view this new phenomenon with approval. They are relieved that dating no longer solely depends on their willingness and courage to take the first step. Then why am I so nervous?

4 I tell myself to relax since dating is more casual today. A college date means anything from studying together to simply having leisure time together like watching a film. Most of my peers prefer casual dating because it's cheaper and comfortable. Students have fewer anxiety attacks when they ask somebody to play tennis than when they plan a formal occasion.

5 As an added bonus casual dating also encourages people to forge healthy friendships prior to starting romantic relationships. Young people can relax and get to know each other more easily this way. For example my roommate and her boyfriend were friends for four months before their chemistry clicked. They went out often with a bunch of mutual friends. They alternated paying the dinner check. "He was like any other friend" my roommate said laughing. Another friend of mine believes casual dating improves people's social lives allowing them to circulate in wider social circles. When she wants to let a guy know she is interested she'll say "Hey let's go get a yogurt." or "How about a cup of tea?"

6 Who pays for it? It's not as easy as it used to be because the traditional rules of courtship are undergoing major changes. Preliminary statistics also affirm this. A plurality of young men say women should chip in and help pay after a few dates. An almost equal percentage of women offer to pay for themselves even on a first date. But widespread confusion still exists. The new rules have yet to be clarified.

7 My own past dates have taught me some things. Either "going Dutch" or allowing my date to pay can be a definite challenge. One date whipped out his wallet on our first date before I could suggest otherwise. During an after-dinner walk he proceeded to tell me he was romantically interested in me. After I explained I was more interested in friendship he seemed unhappy. He explained that since I'd accepted his paying for my dinner he'd assumed I was interested in romance. He seemed angry with himself for treating me. I regretted allowing him to.

8 Another date frowned when I hastily opened my purse pulled out my wallet and offered to go Dutch. I asked politely "How much do I owe you?" He said "Uh uh you really don't owe me anything but if you insist …" He looked exceedingly embarrassed. To him my gesture of offering to pay had conveyed a message of rejection.

9 Everyone seems confused as they try to clarify the new rules of dating. Who should ask whom out? Who should pay and when? So while I do think dressing up and going out on traditional formal dates is a blast I thrive on casual dating because it has brought a valuable dimension to my social life. With casual dating there's less pressure and more equality. I can give roses as well as receive them! Casual dating is worthwhile because it works.

10 So here I am waiting. No magic formula guarantees he will say "yes". I just have to relax be myself and ask him out in a no-nonsense manner.

11 He finally arrives. Sliding into his desk he pats my shoulder and asks "Hi what's up?"

12 "Good morning" I answer cautiously. With a knot in the pit of my stomach I conquer my fear and ask "Hey how about lunch after class on Friday?"

13 "You mean after the midterm?" he says with barely concealed enthusiasm. "I'd love to go to lunch with you."

14 Thrilled and smiling broadly I confirm "Well then we'll save the date!""Yes we will!" he replies cheerfully.

Spend or save The student's dilemma

1 Do you feel as confused and manipulated as I do with this question "Should I spend or should I save?" I think that the messages we get from our environment seem to defy common sense and contradict each other. The government tells us to spend or we'll never get out of the recession. At the same time they tell us that unless we save more our country is in grave danger. Banks offer higher interest rates so we increase savings. Then the same banks send us credit card offers so we can spend more.

2 Here's another familiar example: If we don't pay our credit card bill on time we get demanding nasty emails from the credit card company saying something like: "Your failure to pay is unacceptable. Pay immediately or you'll be in trouble!" Then as soon as we pay we get a follow-up email in a charming tone telling us how valuable a customer we are and encouraging us to resume spending. Which depiction is correct: a failing consumer in trouble or a valued customer? The gap between these two messages is enormous.

3 The paradox is that every day we get two sets of messages at odds with each other. One is the "permissive" perspective "Buy spend get it now. You need this!" The other we could call an "upright" message which urges us "Work hard and save. Suspend your desires. Avoid luxuries. Control your appetite for more than you truly need." This message comes to us from many sources: from school from parents even from political figures referring to "traditional values". Hard work family loyalty and the capacity to postpone desires are core American values that have made our country great.

4 But the opposite message advertising's permissive message is inescapable. Though sometimes disguised the messages are everywhere we look: on TV in movies on printed media and road signs in stores and on busses trains and subways. Advertisements invade our daily lives. We are constantly surrounded by the message to spend spend spend. Someone recently said "The only time you can escape advertising is when you're in your bed asleep!"

5 It's been calculated that by the age of 18 the average American will have seen 600000 ads; by the age of 40 the total is almost one million. Each advertisement is doing its utmost to influence our diverse buying decisions from the breakfast cereal we eat to which cruise line we will use for our vacation. There is no shortage of ideas and things to buy! Now of course we don't remember exactly what the products were but the essential message is cemented into our consciousness "It's good to satisfy your desires. You should have what you want. You deserve the best. So you should buy it now!" A famous advertisement said it perfectly "I love me. I'm a good friend to myself. I do what makes me feel good. I derive pleasure from nice things and feel nourished by them. I used to put things off. Not anymore. Today I'll buy new ski equipment look at new compact cars and buy that camera I've always wanted. I live my dreams today not tomorrow."

6 What happens as we take in these contradictory but explicit messages? What are the psychological and social consequences of this campaign to control our spending habits? On one hand we want more things because we want to satisfy our material appetite. Most of us derive pleasure from treating ourselves. On the other hand a little voice inside us echoes those upright messages: "Watch out take stock of your life don't let your attention get scattered. Postpone your desires. Don't fall into debt. Wait! Retain control over your own life. It will make you stronger."

7 Anyway many of the skills you need as a successful student can be applied to your finances. Consider your financial well-being as a key ingredient of your university education as money worries are extremely stressful and distracting. They can make you feel terrible and hinder your ability to focus on your prime objective: successfully completing your education.

8 How can you be a smart and educated consumer? Many schools community organizations and even some banks offer financial literacy classes. Consider consulting with your school's financial aid office or seek input from your parents or other respected adults in setting up a budget. An additional option is finding a partner to help you stay on track and find pleasure in the administration of your own financial affairs. Most importantly if you find yourself getting into financial trouble don't let your ego get in your way; urgently get help with tackling your problem before it spins out of control and lands you in legal troubles.

9 All this will help you become an educated consumer and saver. As you learn to balance spending and saving you will become the captain of your own ship steering your life in a successful and productive direction through the choppy waters.

﻿

A $3000 dictionary

1 I remember a day some years back on one of the first days of a new semester in college. People were tossing balls passing out catalogs and handing out free stuff. I was completely charmed by all the activity. After all a major feature of college life is limited finances. Free stuff is like gold and I felt entitled to my share!

2 I moved closer to scout out the situation. In my mind I heard my mother issue her famous line: "There is no such thing as free stuff!" as the student behind the table urged me to receive a brand-new dictionary. My mom's voice was quickly filtered out as I reached out to claim my gift. I was handed a form instead. Once I completed the credit card application I was told I would receive a free dictionary. With the confidence that a probe of my finances would reveal the sheer weakness of my profile I completed the form and submitted it.

3 To my sheer amazement plastic freedom made its way into my mailbox a few weeks later. At first I was shocked that these huge credit card corporations trusted me a struggling student holding two minimum wage part-time jobs and paying monthly installments on a purchased computer. But the credit card company seemed to know more than I did so I accepted the card and decided it was perfect to develop my own credit like so many had done before me.

4 My first purchases were tame: a T-shirt vitamins or a CD as if I hadn't had the card. Soon however I began to buy things that I wanted. With my artificial sense of security I bought a guitar a fishing rod and a hunting rifle long-stem roses for my girlfriend a brand-new wardrobe a sophisticated new calculator and countless other trifles I felt I "absolutely needed". I began to accumulate debt.

5 Making matters worse I lost one part-time job and with it my output of funds grew ever smaller like those now long-dead roses. I began taking cash advances just to eat. There was barely enough money from my paychecks to cover basic ongoing living expenses and satisfying the minimum monthly payment on the card was impossible. Now the principal balance doubled due to late payment penalties and other sanctions that the credit card issuer imposed in accordance with the contract.

6 Usually I'm not a person who takes things too seriously. I always see the positive side of negative situations but the gravity of my credit card debt crisis had left me in despair. My parents provided the tuition for school so I believed it was my responsibility to take care of everything else in my life. I owed them more than I could possibly imagine specifically their vision of a boy becoming a truly autonomous man. Now I was letting them and myself down. Every time my mom called to chat she always asked if I needed money. I knew her heart would break if I had said "Yes" so I shrugged it off and hid everything from her.

7 I began to lose interest in many activities in which I'd become involved. Friends would call and invite me for dinner but my finances would prohibit any expenses so I'd decline every time. I would manufacture excuses for why I always said "No" to their offers. My dirty little secret began to tear at my emotional stability. Soon calls from friends became more infrequent meeting new people was out of the question and my mom began exclaiming she didn't know why she even bothered to call me. A simple matter of credit card debt caused me to drive everything I cared about from my life. I felt emotionally crippled and financially bankrupt!

8 After graduation I finally explained my financial distress to my mother. It had been several years since my awful money issues began so I believed the wound to be fairly well healed but the blend of disgust and emotion I felt when I explained my credit card debt was torture. I choked on every word and I hesitated on the number. I felt physical pain when I looked her in the eye. There was nothing more terrifying to me than exemplifying a parent's nightmare. The time had come to move toward a solution. At that moment I felt the negativity I had brought into my life began to dissolve.

9 Recently I learned that I'm not an isolated case not the only college student to suffer from credit card chaos. In a time of sky-high tuition costs many students fall to the temptation of easily accessible credit cards. They are left with tremendous amounts of debt before their lives have even truly begun.

10 Credit card is not the criminal. However there is a suspicion that credit card companies have provided students with access to debt knowing it has the potential to ruin their future. To remedy this situation the screening procedures must become more severe and college campuses should be free of credit card marketers. If this does not change many students like myself will suffer the consequences of the illusion of a seemingly free but staggeringly expensive $3000 dictionary.

Door closer are you?

1 The next time you're deciding between rival options one which is primary and the other which is secondary ask yourself this question: What would Xiang Yu do?

2 Xiang Yu was a Chinese imperial general in the third century BC who took his troops across the Zhang River on a raid into enemy territory. To his troops' astonishment he ordered their cooking pots crushed and their sailing ships burned.

3 He explained that he was imposing on them a necessity for attaining victory over their opponents. What he said was surely motivating but it wasn't really appreciated by many of his loyal soldiers as they watched their vessels go up in flames. But the genius of General Xiang Yu's conviction would be validated both on the battlefield and in modern social science research. General Xiang Yu was a rare exception to the norm a veteran leader who was highly respected for his many conquests and who achieved the summit of success.

4 He is featured in Dan Ariely's enlightening new publication Predictably Irrational a fascinating investigation of seemingly irrational human behavior such as the tendency for keeping multiple options open. Most people can't marshal the will for painful choices not even students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where Dr. Ariely teaches behavioral economics. In an experiment that investigated decision-making hundreds of students couldn't bear to let their options vanish even though it was clear they would profit from doing so.

5 The experiment revolved around a game that eliminated the excuses we usually have for refusing to let go. In the real world we can always say "It's good to preserve our options." Want a good example? A teenager is exhausted from soccer ballet piano and Chinese lessons but her parents won't stop any one of them because they might come in handy some day!

6 In the experiment sessions students played a computer game that provided cash behind three doors appearing on the screen. The rule was the more money you earned the better player you were given a total of 100 clicks. Every time the students opened a door by clicking on it they would use up one click but wouldn't get any money. However each subsequent click on that door would earn a fluctuating sum of money with one door always revealing more money than the others. The important part of the rule was each door switch though having no cash value would also use up one of the 100 clicks. Therefore the winning strategy was to quickly check all the doors and keep clicking on the one with the seemingly highest rewards.

7 While playing the game students noticed a modified visual element: Any door left unclicked for a short while would shrink in size and vanish. Since they already understood the game they should have ignored the vanishing doors. Nevertheless they hurried to click on the lesser doors before they vanished trying to keep them open. As a result they wasted so many clicks rushing back to the vanishing doors that they lost money in the end. Why were the students so attached to the lesser doors? They would probably protest that they were clinging to the doors to keep future options open but according to Dr. Ariely that isn't the true factor.

8 Instead of the excuse to maintain future options open underneath it all the students' desire was to avoid the immediate though temporary pain of watching options close. "Closing a door on an option is experienced as a loss and people are willing to pay a big price to avoid the emotion of loss" Dr. Ariely says. In the experiment the price was easily measured in lost cash. In life the corresponding costs are often less obvious such as wasted time or missed opportunities.

9 "Sometimes these doors are closing too slowly for us to see them vanishing" Dr. Ariely writes. "We may work more hours at our jobs without realizing that the childhood of our sons and daughters is slipping away."

10 So what can be done to restore balance in our lives? One answer Dr. Ariely says is to implement more prohibitions on overbooking. We can work to reduce options on our own delegating tasks to others and even giving away ideas for others to pursue. He points to marriage as an example "In marriage we create a situation where we promise ourselves not to keep options open. We close doors and announce to others we've closed doors."

11 Since conducting the door experiment Dr. Ariely says he has made a conscious effort to lessen his load. He urges the rest of us to resign from committees prune holiday card lists rethink hobbies and remember the lessons of door closers like Xiang Yu.

12 In other words Dr. Ariely is encouraging us to discard those things that seem to have outward merit in favor of those things that actually enrich our lives. We are naturally prejudiced to believe that more is better but Dr. Ariely's research provides a dose of reality that strongly suggests otherwise.

13 What price do we pay for trying to have more and more in life? What pleasure and satisfaction can be derived from focusing our energy and attention in a more concentrated fashion? Surely we will have our respective answers.

14 Consider these important questions: Will we have more by always increasing options or will we have more with fewer carefully chosen options? What doors should we close in order to allow the right windows of opportunity and happiness to open?

﻿

When enough is enough

1 Recently I rushed into a Gap store to buy a pair of jeans. A salesperson asked if she could help. "I want a pair of jeans 32-28" I said in haste.

2 "Do you want slim fit easy fit relaxed fit baggy or extra baggy?" she ventured. "Do you want stone-washed acid-washed button-fly or regular-fly faded or regular?"

3 I stopped. I didn't have a hint not the remotest idea of what she had asked so I said "I just want regular jeans. You know – the kind that used to be the only kind."

4 She pointed in the right direction. The trouble was with all those options distributed in front of me I wasn't sure what I wanted. So I tried on pair after pair of jeans for almost two hours trying to decide. It wasn't a big decision little depended on my choice but I was convinced that one pair had to be just right for me.

5 The jeans I chose were fine but this simple transaction provoked a strong reaction in me. Buying a new pair of pants shouldn't render someone a wreck! Purchasing jeans was once an easy choice; now it's become a complex decision.

6 Choices in modern life have increased tremendously. A typical store in 1900 had only a few dozen categories with one or two options per category. Modern supermarkets have 50000 to 60000 items in thousands of categories. Looking for hair-care products? There are more than 350 types of shampoo and conditioners. Need a painkiller? There are almost 100 options. Toothpaste anyone? You have 40+ types to choose from!

7 It's true that enforced restrictions with very limited or no choices make life unbearable and having options does increase our sense of liberation and control. However my jeans purchase highlights a different problem. As options increase out of control people often begin to feel their life is crashing down on them. They are overloaded overwhelmed and feel their life growing vacant without meaning.

8 We all rely on common sense to guide us and the implication is that increasing choice should always increase happiness. Surprisingly the opposite is true. Scientists verify that an overabundance of choice tends to bring a subtraction in well-being and happiness.

9 The measure of happiness in the US has been going downhill. The proportion of the population describing itself as "very happy" has declined by five percent approximately 14 million Americans.

10 Of course no one believes that a single factor explains this but accumulating evidence from psychological research indicates that the explosion of choice and tremendous increases in material possessions play a primary role.

11 Increasing expectations seem to be part of the problem. The penetrating message of modern times seems to be: "The more we control our own fate the more we expect to control it. The more we have the more we want to have!" We expect to be able to have a life that is fulfilling exciting and sometimes even selfish! We transfer our high expectations to our property our residences and our families – expecting them to be outstanding and beautiful.

12 Some people believe they should never have to settle for things that are just "good enough". Their trademark is that they expect and accept only the best. Researchers call this group "maximizers". Their thoughts are dominated by an ever-increasing desire for more and a focus on the highest quality. Studies show that maximizers are less optimistic more dissatisfied with and more depressed about their lives than others who are willing to settle for slightly less.

13 I have a friend who makes going out to dinner a nightmare. He struggles to select a dish going in a circular motion between one option and another trying to find the best option. Some students behave the same way looking for jobs as they worry excessively concerning which job option to choose lest they overlook the "perfect" job!

14 We are told we're in the "driver's seat" when it comes to organizing and planning our lives. If we fail it's our own fault and can only accuse ourselves. It is unhealthy to combine overwhelming expectations and options plus a tendency to blame ourselves for failures.

15 The success of 21st-century life turns out to be a bitter-sweet controversy and paradox. People have what they say they want. They're floating in a vast ocean of choices and material goods but finding they're still unfulfilled. Enough is never enough.

16 Let's pause and angle a bright light from the past into our modern times. Over 2000 years ago the famous Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu prescribed: "Be content with whatsoever you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking the whole world belongs to you." And he added this precaution: He who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.

17 Use your college years to stir your heart and renew your life. Withstand the pressure of too many choices to acquire more than you need. Specify what truly matters to you and what does not. Learn when enough is enough and you will trace a path of contentment throughout your life.

Woman at the management level

1 When Monica applied for a job as an administrative assistant in 1971 she was asked whether she would rather work for a male or a female attorney. "I immediately said a man" she says. "I felt that a male-boss/female-employee relationship was more natural needing no personal accommodation whatsoever." But 20 years later when she was asked the same question she said "I was pleasantly surprised that female bosses are much more accessible to their employees; they're much more sensitive and intimate with their employees."

2 Female bosses today are still finding they face subtle resistance. There is still a segment of the population both men and surprisingly women who report low tolerance for female bosses. The growing presence of female bosses has also provoked two major questions that revolve around styles: Do men and women manage differently and if so is that a good thing?

3 Monica is disposed to think so on both counts. Now a 40-year-old mother of four she is president of a public sector labor union with 45000 members. "Relations with my employees are probably different from those of male managers preceding me" she says. "I know what it's like to have to call and say my kid got the mumps so I won't be coming in. I have a more flexible style not soft just more understanding." The man who is Monica's assistant agrees "She tends to delegate more and is always looking for a consensus. People are happy and flourish because they have an input into decisions and they are not mere bystanders; their energies are harnessed. On the other hand consensus takes longer."

4 So are the differences symbolic or real? Plausible studies suggest that men are typically hierarchical goal-oriented and feel entitled. Women by contrast manage diplomatically and share power. That point of view is often challenged and argued. Some proclaim that men and women of similar backgrounds experience and aspirations basically manage in the same way. This view is echoed by younger women especially those who have encountered little gender discrimination. That was certainly the lesson for Nicole. When her father died of a heart attack she was an employee at a petroleum products export company. She quit and took over her family's 160-acre fruit farm in St. David's County. On her first day in the field a worker called her "darling". "He was trying to test me. I was shaking with anger" says Nicole now 34. "I stood erect and said 'You wouldn't have called my father darling and you're not going to take that liberty with me. If you do I'll fire you.'"

5 When women work for women a different dynamic often takes over. Susan a cashier in a Toronto auction house says that she has explored friendships with some of her female bosses and feels she can rely on them more. While women may feel more at ease with a female boss men often have to make concessions to the new working styles. Brian a marine biologist says "It took me a couple of years before I felt comfortable enough to relax around a female manager. In fact my relations with her were much more businesslike."

6 To some extent the male-female differences come down to conflicting styles. One female vice-president discussed the time she burst into tears during a meeting. "Men think that tears are a nuclear weapon in a conventional war. They take exception to a woman crying inferring that she's feeling unhappy or violated." The men failed to understand that what prompted her tears was not hurt but genuine rage. "When we cry it's because we have all this valid rage that has no appropriate release" she says. "Women cry; men get relief by going on with the offense or by veiling their feelings to appear composed."

7 Deborah president of a firm with its headquarters in Toronto says that even if men do understand they sometimes react differently to the identical information and to her cooperative management style.

8 Deborah says that her authority is sometimes undermined by perceptions about her gender. "It stems from the whole social context of traditional roles for men and women" she says. "Mom would tell you to do things but perhaps you wouldn't take as much notice as when Dad told you to do things. Men also have a stronger urge to control" she says.

9 For female bosses the great expectation of some female employees is one more obstacle. Junior women assume a female boss will promote them more quickly than a man would. But they also expect female bosses to be more self-sufficient. "They ask 'Why can't you scan your own stuff?' or 'Why can't you do your own filing?'" says one senior female executive.

10 On the other hand there is no dispute that a few decades ago they would rarely have had a female boss in the workplace. Nina a management consultant says she's vaguely optimistic. "I'm looking forward to the day before I die when we recognize that the best management styles will be composed of the best that both genders bring to the table ..." Well she pauses maybe not before she dies perhaps in her daughter's lifetime.

……

﻿

A proud homemaker

1 When hearing the word housewife what comes to your mind? For many people it's a picture of domestic discontent. Critics of the housewife style in the 1950s seem to find it disgusting that a woman should make it her life's work to raise children clean dishes and make homemade meals creating a healthy happy home. Are we so afraid of going backward that we're too quick to condemn a different lifestyle?

2 I remember my own working days before I settled down as a full-time homemaker. For the duration of time that I was working full time I came home late heated up a prepackaged dinner for my family and busied myself with housework until crawling into bed each night exhausted. My calendar overflowed with little quality time for family or myself. I experienced the same situation growing up in a household with two working parents. My childhood was spent fussing over daily household tasks trying to keep control before all the work could be compounded and get out of control. I appreciate my parents' hard work but a childhood only lasts a short while before it's gone forever. I can't in good conscience let my children look back and wish we had spent less time folding wrinkled clothes and more time together as a family.

3 From my time in the workforce I know how tiring and stressful a 9 to 5 grind can be. I love being able to support my husband when he comes home from work yawning and exhausted. I get extra joy knowing that arriving to a clean relaxing house and having a delicious meal are therapy for his stress. Even more importantly he did many fragments of my job when I was away on business trips: He took care of the house the children and every detail. So he knows that my job as a housewife is a tough demanding 24/7 job. This joint understanding and respect makes our current arrangement a joy to live with and a good example for our children.

4 When I first converted to being a housewife unemployment was embarrassing. However now I know it's wrong to think of a housewife as anything but challenging and important. My daily life is comprised of making breakfast lunch and dinner for my family vacuuming the interior of the household doing laundry and dishes taking care of the lawn and garden and working on my journalism skills. My life resembles the 1950s conservative housewife in the modern world but I don't feel an ounce of discontent. Cooking for example is one of my passions and I can include hobby into my daily life. Every day I reject packaged meals full of preservatives and unhealthy ingredients in favor of good oven-cooked vegetables and protein. I enjoy the process of cooking as well as the result. My loved ones have more energy better moods and we've lost some weight in the process. Furthermore I finish my work early and can spend time in the evenings sitting on the couch talking with my family or playing board games rather than bouncing around cleaning.

5 Of course I don't receive an income for my hours of hard work but my husband and I are a team and we decided democratically that we would rather enjoy living a life with more family time and less money. We've had to trim the unnecessary things and learn to tolerate living without. Trying to explain the difference of income and lifestyle to our children was a particularly difficult episode. Fortunately I have kept a part-time job writing for medical periodicals to supplement our income.

6 Some critics of our lifestyle think that I'm unique in enjoying my home life but it's not the case. Overseas millions of people work from home while still caring for the family. Women in Europe and Asia exert themselves to have a career and still love being housewives. It's becoming too common to substitute "househusbands" for "housewives" around the world as more women join the workforce.

7 Why is it so common to think that women are oppressed and discontented when working to provide for their families' happiness? Must everyone receive happiness in the same way working long hours outside the home? I am revolted by the notion that I must be depressed or unfulfilled because my husband and I have chosen to live in a more old-fashioned setting. I don't suggest that this is the only way or even the best way to manage every family. However I swear that it's the best lifestyle for me and my family. Every day I work harder than I did at my old job and I find that I have more happiness and dignity than I did before. Consider this: In the future when a woman answers that she is a housewife you should avoid discrimination and give her a high five instead of showing pity or giving her a boring glance.

Animals or children? A scientist's choice

1 I am the enemy! I am one of those cursed cruel physician scientists involved in animal research. These rumors sting for I have never thought of myself as an evil person. I became a children's doctor because of my love for children and my supreme desire to keep them healthy. During medical school and residency I saw many children die of cancer and bloodshed from injury circumstances against which medicine has made great progress but still has a long way to go. More importantly I also saw children healthy thanks to advances in medical science such as infant breathing support powerful new medicines and surgical techniques and the entire field of organ transplantation. My desire to tip the scales in favor of healthy happy children drew me to medical research.

2 My accusers have twisted the truth into a fable and cast me as the devil. They claim that I have no moral compass that I torture innocent animals for the sole purpose of career advancement and that my experiments have no relevance to medicine. Meanwhile an uncaring public barely watches convinced that the issue has no significance and publicity-conscious senators and politicians increasingly give way to the lobbying of animal rights activists.

3 We in medical research have also been unbelievably uncaring. We have allowed the most extreme animal rights protesters to creep in and frame the issue as one of "animal fraud" and hatred. We have persisted in our belief that a knowledgeable public would consent to the importance of animal research for public health. Perhaps we have been mistaken in not responding to the emotional tone of the argument. Perhaps we should have responded to those sad slogans and posters of animals by waving equally sad posters of children dying of cancer or external wounds.

4 In the animal rights forum much is made of the volume of pain these animals experience in the name of medical science. Activists deny that we are trying to help and say it is evidence of our evil and cruel nature. A more reasonable argument however can be advanced in our defense. Life is often cruel to animals and human beings. Teenagers are flung from trucks and suffer severe head injuries. Young children barely able to walk find themselves at the bottom of swimming pools while a parent is occupied with something else. From everyday germs to gang violence no life is free of pain. Physicians hoping to relieve the eternal suffering of these tragedies have only three choices: 1) create an animal model of the problem to understand the process and test new therapies; 2) experiment on human beings (some experiments will succeed most will fail); or 3) leave medical knowledge static hoping that accidental discoveries will lead us forward.

5 Some animal rights activists would suggest an optional fourth choice claiming that computer models can create animal experiments thus omitting actual experiments. Computers can imitate the effects of well-understood principles on complex systems as in the application of the laws of physics to airplane and automobile design. However when the principles themselves are in question as is the case with the complex biological systems of human life under study computer modeling alone is of little value.

6 One of the terrifying effects of arresting the use of animals in medical research is that the impact will not be felt for years or even decades. Drugs to cure infection will remain undiscovered surgical and diagnostic techniques will remain undeveloped and fundamental biological processes that might have been understood will remain mysteries. There is the danger that quick decisions by well-meaning politicians will create resolution to diplomatically satisfy the small minority of loud protestors while the consequences and damaging impact of those decisions will not be apparent until long after.

7 Fortunately most of us enjoy good health and the agony of watching one's child die has become a rare experience. Yet our good fortune should not make us unappreciative. Protection from serious sickness and drugs to combat heart disease high blood pressure and stroke are all based on animal research. Most complex surgical procedures such as heart or hip surgery and organ transplantation surgeries were initially developed in animals. Techniques to replace defective genes the cause of so much disease as well as the development of synthetic organs are presently undergoing animal studies. These studies and any subsequent advances will effectively end if animal research is severely restricted.

8 In America today death has become an event isolated from our daily existence. As a doctor who has watched many children die and seen their parents' infinite grief I am particularly angered by any minute expression of caring for the suffering of creatures and so little for sick and dying human beings. People are too protected from the reality of human life and death and what it means.

9 Make no mistake however. I would never advocate needless cruel treatment of animals. The animal rights movement has made a contribution in making us more aware of animals' needs and the need to search harder for suitable alternatives. But if the more radical members of this movement are successful in threatening further research their efforts will bring about a tragedy that will cost many lives. Hence the real question is whether an uncaring majority can be aroused to protect its future against a loud but misdirected minority.

﻿

The right to live A dog's account

1 When I was a puppy I made you laugh and you called me your child. Despite the chewed shoes and pillows I became your best friend. Whenever I was "bad" you'd shake your finger at me and ask "How could you?" Then you'd give in and roll me over on the rug for a rub.

2 My housetraining took a long time because you were terribly busy but we worked on that together until there were no more stains. I remember nights sleeping in your bed listening to your dreams and believing that I'd been provided with a royal life. We rotated between long walks to the park car rides and stops for ice cream.

3 Gradually the rhythm of life changed as you lagged behind spending more time at work and searching for a human mate. I waited patiently comforted you through heartbreaks and disappointments never scolded your bad decisions and leaped happily when you came home or fell in love.

4 Your new wife wasn't a "dog person" but I still welcomed her and showed her affection. I was happy because you were happy. When you reproduced when your babies came along I shared your excitement. I loved their little fingers and toes and wanted to raise them too. Only you both worried I might hurt them so I was shoved into another room or my dog cage.

5 As they grew I became their friend. They buried their hands up to their wrists in my fur and pulled themselves up on unsteady legs investigating my ears and squeezing my muscles. I loved everything about them especially the touch of their clumsy fingers and thumbs. I would have defended them with my very life.

6 I'd sneak into their beds listening to their worries and secret dreams. Together we waited for the sound of your car in the driveway. There had been a time when you kept a photo of me in your wallet. But slowly I went from being your dog to just the dog and you deducted all the money you spent on me from your budget.

7 Suddenly you had a career opportunity in telecommunications in another city and you all moved to a third-story apartment that didn't allow pets. Our rural life in the suburbs was over. On the eve of your departure there was no internal debate the jury had already decided. You'd made the right decision for your "family" but I remember a time when I was part of your family.

8 I was excited about riding with the family in the van until we arrived at the animal shelter. It smelled of strange species of dogs and cats of hell and hopelessness. You filled out the paperwork and said "I know you will find a good home for her." But they weren't enthusiastic knowing how difficult it is to discharge old dogs.

9 Your son cried "No Daddy! Please don't let them take my dog!" I worried what lesson she'd learned about friendship and loyalty love and responsibility and respect for a living organism. You patted my head goodbye avoiding my eyes and refusing to take my collar and walking rope with you the last symbols of our relationship.

10 The two nice ladies were as attentive to us in the shelter as they were expected. They fed us but I had lost my appetite and was experiencing a famine of hope. At first whenever anyone passed my pen I rushed to the front hoping that you had changed your mind about ditching me or that this was all a bad dream. Later I hoped it would at least be someone who cared who might scratch my chin and love me again. Eventually I retreated to a corner and waited for the countdown of my days.

11 I heard her footsteps at the end of the day and I padded along the corridor after her to a separate room. She placed me on the table rubbed her hand down my spine and told me not to worry. She gently placed a tight rubber band around my leg as a tear ran down her cheeklicked her hand in the same way I used to comfort you as she slid the needle into my vein. As I felt the cool injection coursing through my body I lay down sleepily looked into her kind eyes and emitted a low cry "How could you?"

12 Perhaps she took the cue from my sad eyes because she whispered "I'm so sorry." She patted my head and explained that I would waken in a better place where I wouldn't be ignored abused or abandoned a place of love and light. With my last fraction of energy I tried to convey to her with a quick move of my tail that my "How could you?" was not meant for her. It was for you my master. I will think of you and wait for you forever hoping everyone in your life will continue to love you and show you never-ending loyalty as I did. Goodbye.

Never ever give up!

1 As a young boy Britain's great Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill attended a public school called Harrow. He was not a good student and had he not been from a famous family he probably would have been removed from the school for deviating from the rules. Thankfully he did finish at Harrow and his errors there did not preclude him from going on to the university. He eventually had a premier army career whereby he was later elected prime minister. He achieved fame for his wit wisdom civic duty and abundant courage in his refusal to surrender during the miserable dark days of World War II. His amazing determination helped motivate his entire nation and was an inspiration worldwide.

2 Toward the end of his period as prime minister he was invited to address the patriotic young boys at his old school Harrow. The headmaster said "Young gentlemen the greatest speaker of our time will be here in a few days to address you and you should obey whatever sound advice he may give you." The great day arrived. Sir Winston stood up all five feet five inches and 107 kilos of him and gave this short clear-cut speech: "Young men never give up. Never give up! Never give up! Never never never never!"

3 Personal history educational opportunity individual dilemmas none of these can inhibit a strong spirit committed to success. No task is too hard. No amount of preparation is too long or too difficult. Take the example of two of the most scholarly scientists of our age Albert Einstein and Thomas Edison. Both faced immense obstacles and extreme criticism. Both were called "slow to learn" and written off as idiots by their teachers. Thomas Edison ran away from school because his teacher whipped him repeatedly for asking too many questions. Einstein didn't speak fluently until he was almost nine years old and was such a poor student that some thought he was unable to learn. Yet both boys' parents believed in them. They worked intensely each day with their sons and the boys learned to never bypass the long hours of hard work that they needed to succeed. In the end both Einstein and Edison overcame their childhood persecution and went on to achieve magnificent discoveries that benefit the entire world today.

4 Consider also the heroic example of Abraham Lincoln who faced substantial hardships failures and repeated misfortunes in his lifetime. His background was certainly not glamorous. He was raised in a very poor family with only one year of formal education. He failed in business twice suffered a nervous breakdown when his first love died suddenly and lost eight political elections. Later in life he suffered profound grief over the tragic death of three of his four children. Yet his strong will was the spur that pushed him forward strengthening his optimism dedication and determination. It intensified and focused his efforts and enabled him to triumph over the overwhelming failures and profound difficulties in his life. A hundred years later people from around the world commend Abraham Lincoln as the greatest American president of all time.

5 Just like Churchill and Lincoln only those who "keep their eyes on the prize" those who uphold a committed and focused will and spirit will find their endeavors successful. Many artists statesmen writers and inventors have had the same experience. They achieved prosperity because they possessed a fierce will to keep preparing and working and a passion to succeed. They attained success not because it was easy but because they had the will to overcome profound obstacles and to work diligently in the pursuit of their goals.

6 After growing up on a cattle ranch without running water or electricity Sandra Day O'Connor fought to achieve the best education possible. Consistently graduating at the top of her class she worked her way into Stanford Law School where she graduated with honors. But despite all of her hard work Sandra Day O'Connor was still a woman in the 1950s. Even with the prestige of her degree from Stanford she was rejected from the entire law circuit as firms preferred to hire less qualified men rather than risk hiring a female lawyer which was unprecedented. Yet Sandra Day O'Connor refused to give up on her dreams. Through sheer persistence she was eventually nominated and then appointed the first woman Supreme Court Justice of the United States of America. There she acted as a crucial vote on issues like abortion and women's rights.

7 Many people simply say that they want something but they do not expend the substantial effort required to achieve it. Many people let the threat of failure stop them from trying with all of their heart. The secret of success is based upon a burning inward desire a robust fierce will and focus that fuels the determination to act to keep preparing to keep going even when we are tired and fail. As a wise saying goes: "It's not how many times you fall down that matters. It's how many times you get back up that makes success!"

8 Focus on becoming more knowledgeable. Focus on gradual consistent progress. Maintain the strong will to keep going even when you are tired and want to slack or the odds seem too large. "Keep your eyes on the prize!""Where there's a will there's a way!" With hard work determination dedication and preparation you can transcend any handicap accomplish any feat and achieve success!

﻿

Chance favors the prepared

1 Les Brown and his twin brother were adopted by Mamie Brown a kitchen worker shortly after their birth in a poverty-stricken Miami neighborhood.

2 Because of his overactive behavior and nonstop talking as a child Les was placed in special education classes for the learning disabled all the way through high school. Upon graduation he became a garbage collector. The prospective opportunities for his future looked slim to others but not to Les. He had a passion a dream a big dream that he was ready to work hard for. He was destined to be a disc jockey also known as a "DJ" one of the radio celebrities mixing music broadcasts for the whole city.

3 At night he would take a radio to bed so he could indulge his dream by listening to the local DJs. He created an imaginary radio station in his tiny bedroom. A hairbrush served as his microphone as he energetically practiced speaking his masterpieces to his imaginary listeners.

4 He aggravated his friends with his constant practicing. They all told him that he didn't have a chance and he would never be a DJ. They scorned him and said to stop dreaming and focus on the real world. Nonetheless Les didn't let their negativity stop him. He kept his goals close to his heart and remained wrapped up in his own world completely absorbed in preparing for his future preparing to live his dream as a renowned DJ.

5 One day Les decided to take the initiative and begin with this enterprise. He boldly went to the local radio station and told the station manager he understood the layout of the station and was ready to be a disc jockey.

6 The manager looked dubiously at the untidy young man in overalls and a straw hat and inquired "Do you have any expertise in broadcasting?"

7 Les replied "No sir I don't."

8 "Well son I'm afraid we don't have a job for you then" he responded bluntly. So Les' first chance at success had been a complete bust.

9 Les was determined. He adored his adoptive mother Mamie Brown and was careful with his money to try and buy her nice things. Despite everyone's discouragement she believed in him and had taught him to pursue his goals and persist in his dreams no matter what others said.

10 So in spite of what the station manager had originally said Les returned to the station every day for a week. His persistence was very persuasive and the station manager finally gave in and took Les on to do small tasks at no pay. Les brought coffee and food. He catered to their every need at work and worked overtime whenever necessary. Eventually his enthusiasm won their confidence and they would send Les in their Cadillac to pick up celebrities not knowing that he didn't even have a driver's license!

11 While hanging out with the station's real DJs Les taught himself their posture and hand movements on the control panel. He stayed around the studio soaking up whatever knowledge he could. He was disciplined; back in his bedroom at night he faithfully practiced in anticipation of the opportunity he knew would come.

12 One afternoon at work the DJ named Rock started to feel very sick while on the air. Les was the only person around and he realized that Rock was coughing and losing his voice. Les stayed close in case there was some way he might help alleviate his co-worker's distress. He also worried that the illness was sure to doom this broadcast.

13 Finally when the phone rang Les grabbed it. It was the station manager as he knew it would be.

14 "Les this is Mr. Klein. I don't think Rock can finish his program."

15 "Yes" he murmured "I know."

16 "Would you call one of the other deejays to come in and take over?"

17 "Yes sir I sure will."

18 But try as he might none of the regular DJs were available. MC Cormick and DJ Slick were both out of town for the weekend and DJ Neil was also feeling sick. It seemed that the radio station was in big trouble.

19 Frantic with distress Les called the general manager. "Mr. Klein I can't find nobody" Les said.

20 Mr. Klein then asked "Young man do you know how to work the controls in the studio?"

21 "Yes sir" replied Les grinning with the sudden opportunity. He didn't even blink before he called his mother and his friends. "You all go out on the front porch and turn up the radio because I'm about to come on the air!" he said.

22 Les rushed into the booth hoisted Rock onto a nearby couch and sat down in his place. He was ready. He flipped on the microphone and eloquently rapped "Look out! This is me LB Les Brown! There were none before me and there will be none after me. Therefore that makes me the one and only. Young and single and love to mingle. Qualified to bring you satisfaction a whole lot of action. Look out baby I'm your lovin' man."

23 Because of his preparation Les was ready. He had dazzled the audience and heard applause from his general manager. From that fateful beginning Les was propelled to become an icon in broadcasting politics public speaking and television.

Swimming through fear

1 I was on a tour of France with my friends when our car pulled to a stop at the beach and we saw the Mediterranean Sea. Massive waves surged against large rocks that formed a waterproof jetty. People said this beach was known for its notorious rip currents. I shivered with fear. Nothing scared me as much as water.

2 Just the sight of the sea made me sick to my stomach.

3 I'd always loved water and been a good swimmer until last summer when I'd decided to climb up to the highest diving board at the pool. I'd hopped from that height and hit the water with an incredible impact. The air was ousted from my lungs and I blacked out. The next thing I knew my brother was pulling my feeble body out of the pool. From then on my fear wouldn't recede; I was absolutely terrified of water.

4 "Jason are you coming?" my friend Matt called.

5 "Yeah" I said. "Just enjoying the view" from dry land I added silently worried they might deem my fear pathetic if they knew.

6 Suddenly I heard shouting in French. A mob of people were running into the sea fully clothed. That's odd I thought.

7 I glimpsed something moving up and down amid the waves past the end of the jetty. I gasped realizing the catastrophe with horror. That's a little boy out there! The would-be rescuers fought against the tide but the situation was bleak. With the water's tow they'd never get to him in time.

8 I looked back at the boy. His head popped up then a wave crashed over him and he disappeared for a moment; I had to intervene.

9 I appraised the situation and realized the jetty! The boy was close to it; maybe I could help from there. I raced down the beach out onto the jetty and it hit me: Water! My palms got sweaty and my stomach felt sick symptoms of my fear. I stopped short.

10 The people in the water had underestimated the waves and weren't making any progress. I was the only one who saw that going out on the jetty was the fastest way to reach the drowning boy. Yet in the midst of this tragedy I was extremely terrified. I tried to remember the lifeguard training I'd had as a teenager.

11 I was paralyzed with fear but I forced myself to move forward with this impromptu rescue. I don't want this. Surely someone else can save him before I have to.

12 At the ridge of the jetty I whirled around convinced I'd see an athletic swimmer plowing through the rough water toward the boy. To my dismay no one was there. I turned back out to the sea to see the boy battered by vicious waves about 25 yards away from me. Sucking in a deep breath I threw myself into the water. As soon as I jumped in I felt like I was back in that pool breathless struggling terrified. Salt stung my eyes. Focus I shouted in my head. Where is he?

13 Then with clarity I saw a thin arm waving weakly a few yards away. I swam with all my strength reaching the boy just as he sank below the surface. I grabbed his arm and pulled. He popped back up eyes wide with terror pawing and twisting against me. "Repose (Calm down)!" I commanded the boy in French. His struggling would derail any rescue attempt and we'd both perish. "Repose!" I commanded again. Thankfully this time he listened and was still.

14 When I turned back toward shore a wave pounded over us. The jetty was further away! The rip current! It was forcibly dragging us out to the sea. I fought to get us back to land but made little progress. I knew I'd never be able to escort him back like this.

15 Desperate to survive I remembered what I'd learned in my life saving class: Never ever swim against the rip current! Swim sideways to the pull of the current and slowly make your way back toward shore. It was an odd-looking but practicable solution. Swim sideways and float to rest. Swim sideways and float to rest. We did that over and over. We slowly made our way to safety. "Jason you can do it!" I heard Matt say as he stood on the jetty. I hadn't even noticed how close we were only about seven feet left to go.

16 And as we made our way to safety I realized something incredible: I was no longer afraid. That absence of fear was a moment of triumph!

17 Matt jumped into the water. I tossed the boy to him. Just as I let go a big wave picked him up and carried him all the way to Matt.

18 On the brink of collapse I stopped fighting just letting myself go. My hand hit the jetty. It was like an electric shock that brought me back to my senses. Someone grabbed for me.

19 I felt strong arms lift me. I ascended not only from the sea onto the secure rocks of the jetty but also to my salvation leaving behind the terrible fear that had gripped me for so long. I turned my head and saw the boy was hugged tightly by his mother. I looked out to the sea. Weary as I was the water had never looked so beautiful.

﻿

When courage triumphed over fear

1 I know what courage looks like. I saw it on a flight I took six years ago and only now can I speak of it without tears filling my eyes at the memory.

2 When our plane left New York that Friday morning we were a talkative high-energy group. The early-morning transcontinental flight hosted mainly professional people going to San Francisco for a day or two of business. As I looked around I saw lots of designer suites CEO-level expensive haircuts designer briefcases and all the trimmings of lofty business travelers. I settled back with my paperback novel for some light reading and the brief flight ahead.

3 Immediately upon take-off long before we had reached our cruising altitude it was clear that something was wrong. The aircraft was bumping vertically up and down and tilting left to right. All the experienced travelers including me looked around with knowing grins. We had experienced minor problems and turbulence on prior flights. If you fly very much you see these things and learn to act relaxed about them.

4 It wasn't long before our relaxed attitudes began to evaporate. Minutes after we were in flight our plane began dipping wildly and one wing plunged downward. The plane climbed higher but that didn't help our plight. The pilot soon provided some grave news regarding the flight.

5 "We are having some difficulties" he said. "At this time it appears we have no nose-wheel steering. Our indicators show that our landing system has failed which necessitates that we abort the flight and return to New York. Because of the problems with the mechanism o if you look out the windows you will see that we are dumping fuel from the airplane. We want to have as little on board as possible in the event of a rough touchdown."

6 In other words we were about to crash. No sight has ever been so sobering as that fuel hundreds of gallons of it streaming past my window out of the plane's tanks. The flight attendants scrambled to get people into position and comforted those who were instantaneously hysterical.

7 As I looked at the faces of my fellow business travelers I was stunned by the changes I saw. Many looked visibly frightened now. Even the most sophisticated looked vulnerable and grim. Their faces actually looked panicked. There wasn't a single exception and I realized that no one faces death without fear; no one is immune to its terror.

8 Then somewhere in my proximity I overheard a still calm voice underlying the panic. It was a woman's voice speaking in an absolutely normal conversational tone. Despite the circumstance there was no angry emotion or tension and this calm voice evoked a calm in me that quieted some of my initial fears. It became imperative that I find her.

9 All around the cabin people cried. Many moaned and screamed. A few of the men maintained their appearance of calm by bracing against their armrests and grinding their teeth but their fear was written all over them.

10 Try as I might I could not have spoken so calmly so sweetly at that moment as the fabulous voice I heard. Finally I saw her.

11 In the midst of all the chaos a mother was talking just talking to her child. The woman in her mid-30's and unremarkable looking in any other way was staring full into the face of her daughter who looked about four years old. The child listened closely sensing that her mother's words were invaluable. The mother's gaze held the child so fixed and intent that the child seemed untouched by the sounds of grief and fear all around her.

12 I strained to hear what this mother was telling her child. I relished the sound of calm confidence amongst the terror. Finally I hovered nearby and by some miracle could hear her soft sure confident voice say in a calming tone over and over again "I love you so much. Do you know for sure that I love you more than anything?"

13 "Yes Mommy" the little girl said.

14 "And remember no matter what happens that I love you always; and that you are a good girl. Sometimes things happen that are not your fault. You are my beloved good girl and my love will always be with you."

15 As her first concern was for her daughter's well-being the mother then put her body over her daughter's strapping the seat belt over both of them to save her daughter from a possible wreckage.

16 Then for no earthly reason our landing gear held and we glided to a gentle stop. It was all over in seconds. Our touchdown was smooth and easy; the tragedy we had feared was not our destiny.

17 The voice I heard that day never hesitated never acknowledged dread and maintained an evenness that seemed emotionally and physically impossible. During that descent not one of the hardened business people could have spoken without a hint of fear in their voice. Only the greatest courage with a foundation of even greater love had brought that mother up and lifted her above the chaos around her.

18 That mom showed me the amazing power of love. And for those few minutes I heard the voice of true courage.

Audrey Hepburn A true angel in this world

1 Audrey Hepburn thrilled audiences with starring roles in noteworthy films like Breakfast at Tiffany's Sabrina Roman Holiday My Fair Lady War and Peace and Always.

2 Despite her success in the film domain the roles she most preferred portraying were not in movies. She was an exemplary mother to her two sons and a UNICEF (the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) Ambassador of Goodwill serving victims in war-torn countries.

3 As a young girl during the Nazi occupation of her native Holland Audrey Hepburn was aware of the brutality death and destruction of war. She was hungry and malnourished as her family was bankrupted as a result of the invasion. Audrey's father abandoned the family and two of her uncles were taken captive and killed. Audrey was grabbed off the street by Nazis and placed in line to be sent to a work camp. When the guards glanced away she darted off barely escaping and huddled in a cold foul basement full of rats.

4 The little girl who would become the world's most magical actress began as an anonymous refugee confronting life's horrors and fragility firsthand. But she refused to allow her spirit to be afflicted by the desperate reality of her young life. Instead she transcended those challenges but never forgot what it felt like to suffer to be hungry alone and helpless.

5 After the war Audrey and her mother left Holland arriving in London as poor immigrants. Her dream of becoming a prime dancer drove her into a rigorous schedule at a famous ballet school. Later she was spotted by a producer and eventually landed a role in the film Roman Holiday starring Gregory Peck one of Hollywood's top leading men.

6 Soon Audrey was transformed from a malnourished immigrant to an internationally famous movie star. Director Billy Wilder complimented her saying "Audrey walked beautifully she spoke beautifully." Although she won many Academy Awards and other honors for acting Audrey felt that her most significant work was humanitarian work with those in need and as the mother to her two sons. She suffered through two divorces and from her memories of the war. Yet Audrey never let her sadness overcome her or jeopardize her hope for a brighter future. Audrey finally met her soul mate Robert Wolders and spent the last 12 years of her life with him.

7 Becoming famous never changed Audrey's generous and compassionate character. She felt a deep sense of responsibility to alleviate suffering of those in need especially children. Friends said Audrey had a complete lack of ego and accepted and appreciated others as they were.

8 Though she became very wealthy she owned only one home in Switzerland. For Audrey it was a paradise where she could hide from the world with her beloved family work in her garden and take long walks in nature.

9 In 1988 Audrey was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF designed to provide emergency food and healthcare to children suffering the destruction of war or other catastrophes. In that role her lifelong passion for helping those in need found its greatest calling.

10 She turned down three million dollars to pen her autobiography and instead accepted one dollar a year in the more conscientious role as diplomat for UNICEF. For seven months out of each of her last five years she and Robby left the peace and beauty in their cozy home to embark on outreach trips into some of the most difficult places on earth. From Bangladesh Sudan India Vietnam Kenya Ethiopia Central and South America to Somalia Audrey Hepburn traveled representing UNICEF making over 50 emotionally draining and physically dangerous missions into bleak destinations to raise world awareness of wars and droughts. Having been a victim of war she understood the blessing of being the beneficiary of food clothing and most of all hope.

11 Audrey felt it was wicked that billions of children were deprived of simple joys and drowned in overwhelming misery. She believed deeply in the ideology that all people share in the duty to care for those in need. Audrey Hepburn was always ready to lead by example. She said: "When you deny childhood you deny life." She saw UNICEF's work as an integral sacred force in people's lives and said of UNICEF's results "Anyone who doesn't believe in miracles is not a realist."

12 In 1992 Audrey was stricken by cancer. She Robby and her two sons returned to their home in Switzerland for their last Christmas together.

13 Audrey's long-time friend and world-famous French fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy spoke to his cherished friend for the last time just before she died. He said she was "... serene at the end because she knew she had achieved everything with perfection".

14 Audrey Hepburn's passion for service was enduring. Even as her life ended at 63 years of age she remained a gracious woman who perpetually signified simplicity charity charm and kindness.

15 The majesty of Audrey Hepburn's spirit of social responsibility and dedication lives on in her words: "Remember if you ever need a helping hand it's at the end of your arm. As you get older remember you have another hand: The first is to help yourself the second is to help others." And "For beautiful eyes look for the good in others; for beautiful lips speak only words of kindness; and for poise walk with the knowledge that you are never alone."

﻿

A life in film

Steven had to face rejections and obstacles in his film-creating efforts but his persistence and dedication transformed the obstacles into an alternative route to success.

1 At 12 years old Steven Spielberg was already visiting film shootings at Universal Studios in his office suit a packed lunch tucked into his briefcase. The young boy tried to immerse himself in film in any way possible. He had been given an administrative job at Universal Studios from a friend of his father's and every day even though he didn't have a legitimate security pass he would try to manipulate his way past the guards and into his personal paradise. Such persistence is hardly surprising from a boy whose lifelong conviction was to "Make sure you are right and go on!" (adopted from a 1954 Disney film).

2 When Steven was eight years old his father gave him a Brownie 8 mm film camera as his birthday present. Steven immediately began collecting footage of family events and he simulated action scenes with his miniature toy spacecraft populating his films with his neighborhood friends as actors. People quickly began to recognize his terrific talent and he won a prize for cinematography for his early westernThe Last Gunfight; years later he won a national contest for his film Escape to Nowhere. His film Firelight was twice analyzed by a national newspaper and was presented in the city theater as if it were a Hollywood premiere. By the time he was 17 years old Steven had established himself as a director with the artistic intuition of a man twice his age.

3 His achievements are certainly related to the personal obstacles and setbacks he faced from an early age. Steven's family moved often so that he was constantly trying to find his place in a turbulent environment with new people. Despite his natural intelligence Steven had a carefree attitude and put little effort into school. He consistently earned only a C average or lower. Socially he wasn't athletic or popular and since his conspicuous interest in film made him seem eccentric classmates shunned and mocked him.

4 His home life was not ideal either as his father's rigid engineering temperament could not understand his or his mother's artistic personalities. Steven would miss his father when he was gone for long work trips and then reverted to furiously arguing with him as soon as he returned. Finally when he was in high school his parents ended their unhappy marriage with a divorce. The theme of the lack of a father figure consistently infected Steven's films.

5 Unfriendly surroundings at home and school made Steven strive even harder to achieve in the film world. He applied to two of the best film schools in the country: the University of Southern California and the University of California Los Angeles. But even with a formidable 10 years of experiences in filmmaking and his friends at Universal Studios endorsing him his grades were too poor and he was flatly turned down at both institutions.

6 Unwilling to give up Steven entered the California State University where he hoped the program in TV and radio might open his way to Hollywood. Unfortunately the university was not suited to his experience and one academician recalled "Steven knew more about cameras mounts and lenses than anyone else in the department. He could teach there." Despite his manifest talent his low grades sabotaged transfer attempts forcing real film schools to withhold acceptance.

7 Steven contrived to rectify the situation on his own by diverting his attention away from academics. He cleaned his old suit and briefcase and returned to visiting Universal Studios where he had worked as a boy. He discreetly sneaked into any department he could such as shooting rooms editing and sound-mixing studios and he quietly watched until he was discovered and ordered to leave. Introducing himself under the pretext of being either an actor director or producer he would invite people to dinner to make connections and learn as much as he could. Even though he was caught and expelled at least once a day he always returned to smuggle himself back in again.

8 Steven repeatedly tried to prove himself to the Universal executives while working in a cafeteria to save up money for equipment. He would discretely create scenes and then shoot and re-shoot his movies. He kept upgrading from 8 to 16 and finally 35 mm film before he was allowed a screening. Finally his film Amblin was given a chance in front of the executives. It was a short silent film and the plot differed greatly from the sci-fi and combat films that would later predominate Steven's career. Still the short film was awesome enough to win Steven only 21 years old a seven-year contract with Universal Studios.

9 After directing smaller TV dramas and low-budget projects Steven earned the chance to direct his big Hollywood debut: a thriller film starring a shark! Jaws was a box office hit and it made Steven famous. He continued his relationship with Universal Studios to produce the notable movies E.T. Jurassic Park and Schindler's List.

10 As his first producer said "It is not by any coincidence that Steven is in his present position." Instead it is Steven's committed spirit that has strengthened him in standing fast against all rejections prejudice and skepticism and driven him to keep moving onward.

The surprising purpose of travel

1 It's 4:15 in the morning and my alarm clock has just stolen away a lovely dream. I almost return back to sleep before my eye catches my packed suitcase and I groan remembering that I'm going to the airport. The taxi is late and then lost and I'm getting increasingly nervous that I'll miss my flight. I run in when we arrive stagger through security and finally get to my gate. After all the trouble of this morning my flight is canceled and I'm stuck in this terminal for the next 218 minutes and my only consolation is a cup of complimentary airport coffee. This is traveling a burdensome series of running and waiting and after countless hours finally getting there.

2 Why do we travel? I don't mind the actual flying the wonder of being airborne in a dense metal bird. The rest of the journey however can feel like a tedious lesson in the ills of modernity from the predawn x-ray screening to the sad airport malls selling clusters of keepsakes. It's the result of a globalized world and it sucks.

3 Sometimes of course we travel because we need to. Because in this digital age there is still something important about the handshake at a business luncheon. Or eating mom's special food on Thanksgiving. Or seeing your girlfriend on your 2-year anniversary.

4 But most travel is decidedly optional. Only corporate travel about 30% of trips over 50 miles is truly compulsory. Instead we travel because we want to because the annoyances of the airport are offset by the thrill of being someplace new. Because work is stressful and our blood pressure is too high and we need a vacation somewhere tropical. Because home is boring. Because the flights are on sale. Because Paris is Paris.

5 Thanks to modern aviation we can now move through space at an inhuman speed. For the first time in human history we can outrun the sun and move from one hemisphere to another in a single day. Of course it's not enough to simply get on a plane. If we want to realize the creative benefits of travel then we have to re-think its overall purpose. Most people after all escape to Paris so they don't have to think about those troubles they left behind. But here's the irony: Our mind is most likely to solve our most stubborn problems while we are sitting in luxury in a Left Bank café. So instead of contemplating that buttery dessert we should be conscious of those domestic issues we just can't solve.

6 The larger lesson though is that our thoughts are saturated with the familiar. The brain is a space of near infinite possibility which means that it spends a lot of time and energy choosing what not to notice. As a result creativity is traded away for efficiency; we think in finite literal prose not symbolic verse. A bit of distance however helps loosen the cognitive chains that imprison us making it easier to mingle the new with the old; the mundane is grasped from a slightly more abstract perspective. According to research the experience of an exotic culture endows us with a valuable open-mindedness making it easier to realize that even a trivial thing can have multiple meanings. Consider the act of leaving food on the plate: In China this is often seen as a compliment a signal that the host has provided enough to eat. But in America the same act is a subtle insult an indication that the food wasn't good enough to finish.

7 Such multicultural contrasts mean that seasoned travelers are open to ambiguity willing to realize that there are decidedly different (and equally valid) ways of interpreting the world. This in turn allows them to expand the circumference of their "cognitive inputs" as they refuse to settle for their first answers and initial guesses.

8 Of course this mental flexibility doesn't come from mere distance a simple change in latitude and longitude. Instead this renaissance of creativity appears to be a side effect of difference: We need to change cultures to experience the disorienting diversity of human traditions. The same facets of foreign travel that are so confusing (Do I tip the waiter? Where is this train taking me?) turn out to have a lasting impact making us more creative because we're less insular. We're reminded of all that we don't know which is nearly everything; we're surprised by the constant stream of surprises. Even in this globalized age we can still be amazed at all the earthly things that weren't included in the Let's Go guidebook and that certainly don't exist back home.

9 So let's not pretend that travel doesn't have its drawbacks or that we endure jet lag for pleasure. We don't spend 10 hours lost in the Louvre because we like it and the view from the top of Machu Picchu probably doesn't make up for the trouble of lost luggage. (More often than not I need a vacation after my vacation.) We travel because we need to because distance and difference are the secret cornerstones of creativity. When we get home home is still the same. But something in our mind has been changed and that changes everything.

Traveling solo A blessing overall!

1 So you're ready to travel. Pick a place any place. Let's say you've always wanted to go to China. You've seen pictures of the Great Wall the Forbidden City Tian'anmen Square. You've always been fascinated with Chinese aesthetics and culture with red fragrant temples and venerable statues. You have a chunk of money saved and extra vacation time earned. Now is the time to go!

2 But maybe you haven't traveled much. You've never been to an exotic place where you can't speak the language or read the signs. A place where you'll have to do all the research for yourself find hotels get yourself around buy locomotive or bus tickets order your own food. You must figure all of this out while looking at the unfamiliar notation which you see wherever you look or go.

3 So now you're ready to realize your dream to explore China and find for yourself the soul of the country. Unfortunately right from the onset none of your friends share that dream. Your sister is pregnant and can't travel. Your best friend just got a new job and can't take time off. So what do you do? You could ask everyone you know friends acquaintances co-workers. You could join a tour. Or you could go alone.

4 To travel alone is a difficult decision for anyone though especially for women. For me it came naturally. I made that trip to China and then zigzagged on a multinational excursion through Indonesia Thailand England and France.

5 But the reactions I've gotten from people I know fellow travelers and especially from the natives of the countries I've visited showed me that solo traveling is strange and even considered inconceivable or reckless by many people. People ask me if the isolation makes me sad or even if I'm more susceptible to violent or dangerous situations.

6 This has been sometimes a blessing sometimes a curse. I remember searching desperately for accommodations in Taiwan. The university listed in my booklet no longer had dormitories for travelers and I was lucky when the desk clerk called a young woman out of a nearby office. As it turned out she was offering to let me stay at her flat and even had a friend come show me around the city the next day.

7 Also in Taiwan I met two girls who smuggled me into their hotel room gave me one of the beds (they shared the other) and took me to a feast with their tour group. When they heard my next stop was their hometown they arranged for a bilingual friend to pick me up at the train station.

8 But there has also been the downside of those not-so-pleasant experiences. In Indonesia a cute boy gave me a ride on his motorbike and thought that gave him license to grope me illicitly. Many times in Indonesia boys menaced me assuming I was willing to pay for their company. In Japan I was picked up by a young man who refused to drop me at my Youth Hostel; he insisted I stay with his friends. The friends turned out to be four girls; I was safe but one snored like a lawnmower and it took me two days to escape.

9 I've been irritated and perplexed many times not speaking a language not understanding or being understood. Once in Italy a hotel clerk tried to overcharge me and only gave up after 10 minutes of arguing. Another time in China a taxi driver insisted I pay more and I was rescued by the doorman of a fancy hotel.

10 Having a companion might have helped safeguard me from some of those problems. But it would have suppressed other opportunities a long afternoon in Thailand all alone in the back of a hay wagon and then seven days in the back of a truck with a Brit two Aussies and two Norwegians! Eating ethnic food on my way through eastern Korea with four youthful Japanese salarymen. Getting sick in China and being nursed with chocolate bars and tissues by a couple from Texas.

11 The few times I have traveled with a companion I haven't had the same ample opportunities to meet people. Other travelers can swap stories with you about the local folklore of the places they've been to and often have credible insights into the place you're visiting. Locals are also more likely to see you as approachable and be upfront with you when you're on your own.

12 Of course you have to be careful not to endanger yourself by throwing caution to the wind. Watch your back but don't presume the worst and be overly fearful. Be friendly with people but watch out for those who are too friendly with you. Don't disregard your instincts. If you hear stories about criminals on a road take the road – just don't take much cash and don't accept Coca Cola from strangers.

13 The key to solo travel is to open your mind close your eyes and leap in! Everything that happens to you is an experience and good bad or neutral they will all benefit you in some way. Take those little annoyances those inefficiencies and those boring bureaucrats with a laugh. If you despise something just remember: You don't live there you can leave anytime and you'll never have to deal with this again!

14 Don't ever let a lack of companionship constrain you from doing what you really want to do. Once you go solo you'll be amazed at how sensational your travel experiences will be.

Will you be a worker or a laborer?

1 To be truly happy a person must feel both free and important. People are never happy if they feel compelled by society to do work they do not enjoy or if what they do enjoy is ignored by society as having no value or importance. In a society where slavery in the strict sense has been abolished the social indications around work the value of work and the salary have degraded many laborers into modern slaves "wage slaves".

2 People are considered laborers if their job has an adverse effect on them yet they feel compelled to continue working by the necessity of conforming to societal expectations and earning the revenue to support themselves and their families. The polar opposite of labor is play. When we play a game we enjoy what we are doing but it is a purely private pastime; society does not care when or whether we play.

3 Between labor and play stands work. People are labeled as workers if their personal interests coincide with the jobs society pays them to do; what is necessary labor from the point of view of society is voluntary play from the individual's personal point of view. Whether a job is to be designated as labor or work depends not on the job itself but on the tastes of the individual who undertakes it. The difference does not for example correlate with the difference between a manual and mental job or between jobs of low or high esteem; a gardener covered in dirt in a greenhouse may be a worker while a well-dressed city mayor may prove to be an unhappy laborer!

4 People's attitude toward their work determines everything. To workers leisure means simply the hours they need to relax and rest in order to work efficiently. Workers are therefore more prone to dedicate more time to working taking too little leisure rather than too much. To laborers on the other hand leisure means autonomy from compulsion so it is natural for them to imagine that the fewer hours they have to spend laboring and the more hours they have free for play the better.

5 Besides the mere hours spent in leisure workers and laborers differ in the amount of personal satisfaction they derive from their jobs. Workers who enjoy their jobs will be happier less stressed and generally more satisfied with their lives. They will also work with more diligence and precision because they have fostered a sense of personal pride in their jobs. On the other hand laborers whose sole incentive is earning their livelihood feel that the time they spend on the daily grind is wasted and doesn't contribute to their happiness. Instead of valuing all 24 hours of their day as enjoyable and productive hours they gauge only the time spent in leisure and play as meaningful. Unfortunately laborers are all too commonplace and only a small percentage of the population is in the lucky position of being workers.

6 In recent decades technological innovation and the division of labor have caused major economic changes by eliminating the need for special strength or skill in many fields and have turned many paid occupations with enjoyable work into boring labor. Increasing productivity with automated machines such as robots has reduced the number of necessary laboring hours. It is possible to imagine an upcoming society in which the majority of the population will have almost as much leisure time as in earlier times was enjoyed by the medieval aristocracy. The medieval aristocrats had an abundance of leisure time but often wasted it in trivial pursuit of games and fashion. Likewise modern-day laborers with too much leisure time may find it difficult to refrain from the addictive and trivial pursuits of celebrity gossip extravagant fashion and excessive video games and TV similar bad habits that waste valuable time.

7 However it's not necessary to take such a toxic attitude toward such a positive thing as leisure time. In fact in many countries people now use their leisure time to improve their minds and their working conditions to create a happier more contented life. Lifelong learning can make the difference between being bored unhappy laborers and workers who find meaning and joy in their employment and life. "Continuing education" or "experiential learning" can offer an array of classes from pleasant diversions such as sports art classes or music to leadership development advanced accounting skills or CAD (computer-aided design) to name only a few.

8 Whatever the job people who enjoy their work find time passes quickly. They hurl their passion into their work be it physical like the work of a smith or more mental like that of a scientist or an artist. Even purely mental work can suffice as an outlet as aptly expressed by the phrase "sinking one's teeth into a problem".

9 Eventually everyone has to find a job and earn a living. Laborers are slaving away at a job they don't enjoy for a small monetary reward waiting all day until they go home and play. But while laborers are counting down the hours workers are energized and focused taking optimum pleasure in the task at hand. By choosing a job that is both useful to society and personally fulfilling workers maintain a simultaneous sense of purpose and enthusiasm that improves their whole lives. So in the end whatever job you choose you must contend with this essential question: Will you be a laborer or a worker?

The joy of a prideful tradition

1 I first met him in 1965 when I rushed into his little shop to have the heels of my shoes repaired. He greeted me with a cheerful smile and instant hospitality. "You're new in this neighborhood aren't you?"

2 Indeed I had moved into a house at the end of the street only a week before.

3 "This is a fine neighborhood" he said. "You'll be happy here."

4 I sat there with my shoes off watching as he got ready to stitch up my shoes I'd entrusted to him. He looked sadly at the leather covering the mount of the heel. It was worn through because I had failed to have the shoes patched a month ago. I grew a little impatient for I was rushing to meet a friend. "Please hurry" I begged.

5 He looked at me over his spectacles. "Now don't worry. I won't be long. This handicraft is my specialty and I want to do a good job." He was silent a moment. "You see I have a tradition to live up to."

6 A tradition? In this simplistic little shop that was no different from so many other shoe-repair shops on the residential side streets of Washington? The thought seemed a bit absurd.

7 He must have sensed my bias for he smiled with a gleam in his eyes as he went on. "Yes I inherited a tradition. My father always told me 'Son do the best job on every shoe that comes into the shop and be proud of your fine work. If you work with dedication you'll always have happiness and money.'"

8 As he handed me the finished shoes he said "These will last a long time. I've utilized good leather."

9 I left in a hurry but I had a warm and grateful feeling. On my way home I passed the little shop again. There he was sitting amongst his tools still working. He saw me and he waved and smiled as cordial as could be. That was the beginning of our friendship a fellowship that came to mean more and more to me as time passed.

10 Thereafter we waved to each other in a friendly greeting when I passed his shop every day. At first I went in only when I had repair work to be done. Then I found myself lingering in his store or dropping in every few days just to chat with him for the joy he would impart.

11 He was a tall man bent from long years of work. What little hair he had was gray; his face was deeply lined. His personality was clear but never stern. And I remember best his fine dark eyes alive with his charitable carefree and humorous spirit.

12 He was the happiest man I've ever known. Often as he stood in front of his door overseeing the street working at a pair of shoes he sang a beautiful melody in a high clear voice. Neighbors nicknamed him "the singing cobbler". The neighborhood children loved him. He'd periodically pause his work to referee arguments or give out candy. He had no patience for bullying and would insist the children play fair in front of his store.

13 One day I came away from my house filled with fury because of a poor job some painters had done on my house. My friend waved to me as I walked by so I went into his shop to vent my frustration. He let me speak angrily about the poor work and carelessness of present-day workmen. "They had no pride in their work" I said. "They just wanted to collect money for doing nothing! The undutiful attitude these days is almost a sin."

14 He consoled me saying "There's a lot of that kind around but maybe we should not blame them too rashly. Maybe their parents had no pride in their work. That's hard on a child. It keeps a child from learning what's important."

15 "What can be done about it?" I asked.

16 He pondered that for a minute before answering. Then he looked at me seriously. "There is only one way. Every man or woman who hasn't inherited a prideful tradition must start building one. In this country each of us can make our own contribution to the fabric of society and we must endeavor to make it a good one. No matter what sort of work a person does if we give it our best each day we're starting a tradition for our children to live up to. When a person amends their ways and learns to take pride in their work a lifetime of happiness will ensue."

17 I traveled for a few months on business and shortly after my return I walked down the street looking forward to seeing my friend again. Yet when I arrived I found the door closed. There was a little sign: "Call for shoes at shop next door."

18 I went into the next shop and what I heard pierced my heart. Yes the old man had passed away. He was stricken with an infectious illness two weeks before and died two days later.

19 I went away with a wretched void in my heart. I would miss him terribly. But he had left me something an important piece of wisdom I will invariably remember: "If you have inherited a prideful tradition you must carry it on; if you haven't then start building one now."

Under the bombs: 1945

1 Today when I look back I'm surprised that I recall the beginning so vividly; it's still clearly fixed in my mind with all its coloring and emotional intensity. It begins with my suddenly noticing 12 distant silver points in the clear brilliant sky filled with an unfamiliar abnormal hum. I'm seven years old standing in a meadow and staring at the points barely moving across the sky.

2 Suddenly nearby at the edge of the forest there's the tremendous roar of bombs exploding. From my standpoint I see gigantic fountains of earth spraying upward. I want to run toward this extraordinary spectacle; it terrorizes and fascinates me. I have not yet grown accustomed to war and can't relate into a single chain of causes and effects these airplanes the roar of the bombs the earth radiating out from the forest and my seemingly inevitable death. Unable to conceive of the danger I start running toward the forest in the direction of the falling bombs. But a hand claws at me and tugs me to the ground. "Stay down" I hear my mother's trembling voice "Don't move!" And I remember that my mother pressing me to her is saying something that I don't yet know exists whose meaning I don't understand: That way is death.

3 It's night and I'm sleepy but I'm not allowed to sleep. We have to evacuate the city and run away in the night like convicts. Where to I don't know; but I do understand that flight has suddenly become some kind of higher necessity some new form of life because everyone is running away. All highways roads and even country paths are a tangle of wagons carts and bicycles with bundles and suitcases and innumerable terrified helplessly wandering people. Some are running away to the east others to the west north south; they run in circles fall from profound fatigue sleep for a moment then begin anew their aimless journey. I clasp my younger sister's hand firmly in mine. We mustn't get lost my mother warns; but even without her telling me I sense that some form of dangerous evil has permeated the world.

4 I'm walking with my sister beside a wagon. It's a simple ladder wagon lined with hay and high up on the hay on a cotton sheet rests my grandfather. He can't move; he is paralyzed another casualty of a landmine. When an air raid begins the entire group dives into ditches; only my grandfather remains on the deserted road. He sees the airplanes flying at him sees them violently dip and aim sees the fire of ammunition hears the roar of the engines passing over his head. When the planes disappear we return to the wagon and my mother wipes the sweat from my grandfather's flushed face. Sometimes there are air raids several times a day. After each one sweat pours from my grandfather's tired face.

5 We're entering an increasingly appalling landscape. There's smoke on the horizon the blaze of battle fading. We pass by deserted villages solitary burned-out houses. We pass battlefields dense with the garbage of abandoned war equipment bombed-out railway stations overturned cars. It smells of gunpowder and of burning decomposing meat after a massacre. Everywhere are the corpses of horses too defenseless in this human war.

6 When winter comes we stop running from the bombs so we can hide from the severe elements. Winter is but another season for those in normal conditions but for the poor during wartime winter is a disaster a pervasive and constant threat. We find an apartment in the slums that provides a minimal coverage from the snow but we still can't afford to heat the furnace; we can't buy fuel nor risk stealing it. Death is the punishment for the robbery of coal or wood human life is now worth next to nothing.

7 We have nothing to eat. My mother stands brooding at the window for hours; I can see her fixed stare. I can see other residents staring out into the street from many windows as if they were waiting for something. I weave my way around the backyards with a gang of stray boys; it's something between play and searching for a scrap of anything edible.

8 One day we hear that they'll be giving out candy in a store near the warehouse. Immediately we make a long queue of cold and hungry children. We stand in the frost all night and the following day huddled together to summon a bit of warmth. Finally they open the store. But instead of candy we are each granted an empty metal container that once held some fruit drops. Weak and stiff from the cold yet at this moment happy I carry my treasure home guarding it jealously. It's valuable; the inside wall of the can still has a sugar residue. My mother heats some water and pours it into the can. We have a dilute sweet drink: Our only nutrition for days.

9 I can't quite remember when or how the war ended for us; my mind is always drawn back to that first day in the meadow the explosions destroying the peaceful flowers and the naive days of my childhood. Try as I might I still can't understand what we could have done to justify all the suffering war inevitably inflicts.

﻿

Smith and Luis

1 Ever since the arrival of the American military Luis Dutarte's world had changed. Overnight a military camp had sprung to life on the empty field just below his home in Normandy. For a seven-year-old orphan it was in essence a dream come to life. His keeper Mrs. Bijeaux had to drag him in at night from his terrace on the cliff overlooking the beach.

2 Now he watched wide-eyed as jeeps roared up the road and men scrambled about emptying trucks loaded with guns ammunition food and giant army bags. He yawned as the scent of crisp bacon eggs coffee and the smell of toast came from the kitchen tent. He tilted his small head back breathing in the fragrance. His stomach moaned.

3 Ronald Smith a lieutenant in the Seabees the US Navy's Construction Battalion held a clipboard and checked off the morning's accomplishments. The hospital tent was complete as was the new shower.

4 Smith and his top sergeant had been busy since dawn and it was now noon. He dispatched him then took a moment and touched the breast pocket that held the photo of his wife and two young sons. It had been more than a year since he'd been deployed and last seen them.

5 When the lieutenant turned to go he saw something in the tall grass on the hill. He waved. A small hand waved back. There was a moment of hesitation; then the boy timidly made his way down.

6 Smith tried out his high school French hoping he could remember the right wording: "Comment t'appelles-tu?" (What is your name?)

7 The boy blushed and his eyes shone. "Luis" he said.

8 Smith shook his hand. This little guy looked like he could use a good meal and the camp had more than enough food. In his halting French Smith invited Luis to have lunch. When the boy nodded Smith lifted him onto his hip as he might have done with one of his own sons and walked briskly toward the tent.

9 Inside dozens of young soldiers ate and talked. Smith piled two plates high with roast beef carrots and apple pie sprinkled with sugar.

10 After lunch Smith held Luis' hand and they walked into the June sunlight. He knelt beside the boy and explained that he had to go back to work. Luis nodded and ran back up the path to the tall grass turning around to wave.

11 At 18:00 hours as Smith was again heading for the mess tent he saw Luis sitting in the same spot. He motioned and Luis ran to him.

12 Dinner was fried chicken potatoes and peanut cookies. Smith again filled two plates but Luis didn't eat as much as he had at lunch; it was clear that the boy wasn't used to so much food. But he clutched Smith's hand and smiled his shy smile. After dinner Smith knelt close to Luis. "Bonsoir" he said. "A demain." (Goodnight. See you tomorrow.) He watched the boy walk up the path and out of sight.

13 Henceforth Luis ate with Smith all of the time. The other soldiers didn't mind; in fact the boy helped ease their homesickness. Luis giggled when Smith carried him aloft on his shoulders and soon began riding along in the jeep down to the beach where Smith supervised the unloading of freight from the ships and took inventory. When Smith oversaw construction projects in the camp Luis tagged along. If Smith left the radius of the camp to rebuild a road or to repair a bridge Luis waited in the vicinity for his return.

14 As the summer of 1944 passed Smith's French improved and Luis learned to say hello goodbye jeep ship and ice cream even though their conversations stayed pretty concise.

15 In mid-October when Smith received orders to leave France he drove to the local authorities to make some inquiries. He ascertained that Luis had been abandoned at birth and had no living relatives. But when he petitioned to adopt him and become his legal guardian the answer was straightforward and firm: no.

16 Notwithstanding the regulations Smith enclosed Luis in a hug and promised to return for him later. The two had grown so close amongst the trials of war and Smith 174 New Horizon College English Third Edition knew he would never forget the boy. What Smith could never have imagined was that he would never see Luis again.

17 After the war ended Smith took a multitude of trips returning to France looking for Luis. But try as he might the familiar landmarks were gone. France was a country torn apart by the bombs of the war and then pieced back together again. Each day Smith would grieve. Yet he remained dogged in his search for Luis. Smith knew in his heart that Luis was still alive and waiting but he simply could not find any remnant of the boy he had come to love like a son. He combed through phone books and even hired a private investigator. His repeated failures haunted him as he repeatedly asked himself punishing questions: Why have I failed Luis? What could I have done differently?

18 As he grew older Smith's pain increased. Finally old age forced him to stop traveling but Smith dwelled more and more on his one broken promise and lifelong regret.

19 In his final will Smith instructed his children to continue where he had left off pleading with them to find Luis.

Surviving an economic crisis

1 The economic slump so many people suffered through originated in the United States with a regulatory failure of mortgages rated less risky than they turned out to be. As large numbers of homeowners proved unable to repay their loans the companies that had the oversight and those that owned the loans (as well as their subsidiaries and their shareholders) lost sizable amounts of money. The effects of these drastic losses soon spiraled into the US job market as layoffs and terminations. The rebound was slow in coming. Many people experienced long months of struggles just like the character in this story.

2 Facing tenant eviction after several months of unpaid rent Sue Johnson packed up whatever she could fit into her two-door automobile and drove out of town.

3 She wound up at a motel putting down the $260 she had managed to scrape together from friends and from selling her living room set. It was all the money Sue had left after her unemployment benefits had expired. She faced life as a migrant a previously unimaginable situation for a woman who not that long before had held a corporate job in a large metropolitan city and was enrolled in a graduate business school.

4 Sue knew that in all likelihood she would end up living in her car. She was part of a hard-luck group of jobless people who called themselves "99ers" because they had exhausted the maximum 99 weeks of unemployment insurance benefits that they could claim.

5 Long-term unemployment was at record levels according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Modest payments of unemployment benefits were a lifeline that enabled people who were out-of-work to maintain at least an appearance of normalcy keeping a roof over their heads putting gas in their cars paying electric and phone bills.

6 Without the checks people like Sue who once was a director of client services at a technology company began to tumble over the economic cliff. The last aspects of their former working-class or middle-class lives were gone and all of them faced unsure futures.

7 When Sue received her last unemployment check she felt a wave of profound grief. With no income to deposit Sue's checking account deteriorated into negative balances. Her car was on the verge of being repossessed. And the constant harassment of the financing company for her car loan added to her daily stress. Each day like a ping pong ball Sue went back and forth between resolve and despair.

8 It was a sickening plunge considering that only a short year and a half before Sue was earning $56000 a year at her old job enjoyed vacationing in places like Mexico and the Caribbean and had started business school at an excellent university.

9 Initially Sue had tried to finish her university certification remotely but finally dropped out because of the stress from her sinking finances. She applied for every possible job in the employment spectrum from minimum-wage retail jobs to director positions.

10 Sue should have been evicted from her two-bedroom apartment for non-payment several months before she was but thankfully the process was delayed by paperwork and bureaucracy. Eventually the bureaucracy caught up with her and a municipal council gave her 10 days to leave her apartment for good. She had no choice but to comply.

11 That last day of her old life Sue wept as she drove away. She wondered if she would ever again be able to reclaim that life of comfort and respect. Sue even considered turning the steering wheel of her car into a tree and ending her life story right there.

12 Friends came to her aid. One friend wired her $200 while she was driving away from her old apartment enabling her to find refuge in a motel along the way. But Sue worried there wouldn't be any more charity for the money and gas she desperately needed.

13 Helped by gas cards donated by a church Sue decided to return to her hometown. She figured the health-care safety net there was better as well as the job market. She contacted a local shelter but learned there was a waiting list. Welfare was not an option because she didn't have young children. And Sue knew that none of her three adult sons were in a position to help her.

14 "I knew the only help I was going to get was from me myself" Sue said. "I thought to myself: I have to take care of myself. I really really need to get work. I need a job. I don't want to be seen as a parasite."

15 Sue's motel room was depressing. Lining the shelves underneath the television were her food supplies: rice and noodles that she mixed with water in the motel's ice bucket and heated up in a microwave; peanut butter and jelly; a loaf of white bread the subsistence of a desperate person. Sue's days were spent surfing Internet job indexes applying for jobs where the silent "No.""No.""No." gave way to a feeling of helplessness.

16 Sue had all new struggles and obstacles to deal with too like what to do for an address for job applications. She worried about what would happen when her cell phone was cut off for non-payment and calls to her number would disappear into an invisible world she could not reach.

17 Finally an old friend sent Sue a ray of hope a small miracle: $300 cash just enough for another brutal week of struggle.

Economic bubbles: Causes and conditions

1 Economic bubbles occur when for any number of reasons excessive investment in commodities (such as oil) securities (such as stocks and bonds) real estate or collectibles drives up prices well beyond the item's intrinsic value. The inevitable result of this boom in price is a crash or bust. The price falls sharply once it becomes clear that it has grown far beyond the purchasing power of potential customers.

2 Speculators risk money in such investments because they hope that the price of an asset they purchased will quickly increase. Since most speculators are nervous about where they invest their money bubbles are by no means the norm. After all every investment entails the risk that it is overpriced. They also know that rising prices will encourage either greater production of a commodity or greater willingness of current owners to sell. Either of these conditions can serve as a "negative feedback" mechanism that adjusts prices downward. As an analogy think of negative economic feedback like your eyes. As the light gets brighter your pupils get smaller and let in less light. But what if instead your eyes worked as a "positive feedback" mechanism? In sunlight your pupils would open wide and damage your eyes.

3 Economic bubbles occur when prices trending sharply upward spur positive rather than negative feedback. For whatever reason (fear of shortages greed an excessively optimistic attitude toward the future or flaws in the analysis of an asset's underlying value) buyers believe that the value of the asset will continue to rise. If the price rises overly enthusiastic speculators buy more or those who missed out on the lower price flock to buy before the price rises any higher. The foremost explanation is the "greater fool theory": Buyers justify their purchases by assuring themselves they will find "a greater fool" who will pay even more. Buyer enthusiasm infects other buyers amplifying the effect even further. Under the right conditions prices can reach dizzying heights before falling. One famous example is the tulip-buying bubble which happened in Amsterdam in the 1630s when a single tulip bulb could cost a year's salary.

4 Most bubbles are easily assimilated or averted by an elastic market. Provided the bubble is small enough the losers earn wisdom in retrospect and the winners earn a lot of money. But the effects of a bubble might become cumulative if many owners of an overpriced asset feel rich and spend foolishly especially in a period of deregulation. Imagine this: You buy a house for $200000 for which you borrowed $160000 beforehand. You have $40000 in equity in the house. Over the next five years the market appraisal rises to $500000. Now you have $340000 in equity ($500000–$160000) so you borrow another $240000 from a bank using this equity to secure the loan. You still have $100000 in equity in your home and you have $240000 to spend. You suddenly feel less need to be economical with your purchases and allocate more money for things like a vacation home a new car etc.

5 But equity is not revenue. The market holds long enough for you to spend the money. Then it crashes and the value of your home falls to $325000. Now you have negative equity and owe the bank almost $400000. So you default on your loan and give your house car and vacation home to the bank. If this situation is widespread it can culminate in the failure of those banks and a severe crackdown on the lending needed to grow the economy.

6 There are also stock market bubbles. In a normal market investors buy stock in a company because they anticipate that future profits will become dividends and they believe the value of the company's assets will increase. Sometimes though a "herd mentality" sets in and too many brokers rush to buy driving prices like mercury up a thermometer to levels that prove unrealistic. Eventually it becomes clear that further increases are not forthcoming and price deterioration develops followed by a swift drop. When this happens to too many companies in aggregate it is called a stock market crash.

7 A recent stock market bubble was the "dot-com" bubble. The buzz about the economic possibilities of the Internet encouraged investors to fund the creation of many dot-com companies too many it turned out. For several years dozens of entrepreneurs sought to duplicate for themselves the results of those that had come before. Many investors envisaged wealth for any business with a website that could advertise on TV or billboards even if their actual services were ambiguous. Instead on March 102000 the dot-com boom reached its peak when the stock index hit 5132.52. Over the next two and a half years the index dropped to as low as 1108. Very few companies bucked the trend. Most had blundered into awful financial difficulties selling off their assets to healthier companies.

8 Bubbles are not limited to the arena of real estate or "get rich" stock offerings. In 1996 a series of stuffed animal toys called Ty Beanie Babies™ became such a fad that speculators bought up large quantities assuming that their value as collectibles would continue to rise. Did anyone make money on that fad? Maybe but why not see for yourself? Check out the price of Beanie Babies in an online auction site and decide if any of these sellers have struck it rich.

Reflections of a Chinese mother in the West

1 A lot of people wonder how Chinese parents raise such successful kids. They are baffled that these parents produce so many children with an abundance of talent and whether they too could raise such a child.

2 The fact is that Chinese parents do things that seem provocative unimaginable even illegal to opinionated Westerners. Chinese mothers can dispense with formal courtesies and say to an obese child who gorges on food "Hey fatty lose some weight." By contrast Western parents must be humane tiptoe around the issue talk in terms of "health" and never ever mention the f-word. And still their kids end up in therapy for eating disorders and a negative self-image. I've thought long and hard about how Chinese parents can get away with what they do and I think there are three ideological differences between Chinese and Western parents.

3 First I've noticed Western parents cradle their children's self-esteem to insulate them from criticism. They worry about how their children will feel if they fail and constantly try to solve their children's worries regardless of how badly they perform. The presumption is that the child is tender not strong and as a result Western parents behave very differently than Chinese parents.

4 For example if a child comes home with an A-minus on a test a Western parent will most likely praise the child. For a Chinese mother an A-minus is no milestone; she will gasp in displeasure and ask what went wrong. If the child comes home with a B some Western parents though hesitant will still praise the child. Other Western parents will express disapproval but they won't question the child's intellect or risk insecurities calling the child "stupid""worthless" or "gross". Privately Western parents may worry about their child but they will never tell the child.

5 If a Chinese child gets a B irrespective of the subject there would first be a screaming hair-tearing explosion. The Chinese mother would intensify her efforts and get dozens maybe hundreds of practice tests and use every tool at her disposal to get her child's grade up to an A.

6 Chinese parents demand perfect grades because they take it for granted that their child can get them and grades are a more important measure of success than "self-esteem". If their child doesn't get all A's the Chinese parents assume it's because the child didn't work hard enough. That's why the solution to substandard performance is always to punish and shame the child. Chinese parents believe that their child is hardy enough to take the shaming and to improve from it.

7 Second Chinese parents believe their kids owe them everything. The reason for this isn't clear but it's probably a combination of the Confucian doctrine of loyalty and the fact that parents have sacrificed so much for their children; so Chinese children must spend their lives repaying their parents by obeying them and making them proud.

8 Another area where Chinese and Westerners clash is that most Westerners don't believe offspring must show permanent gratitude to parents. My Western husband actually has this opposite view. "Children don't choose their parents" he once said to me. "They don't even choose to be born. It's parents who force life on their kids so it's the parents' responsibility to provide for them. Kids don't owe their parents anything. Their duty will be to their own kids." This strikes me as a terrible deal for the Western parents.

9 Third Chinese parents believe they know what's best for their children and therefore have ultimate authority over their children's desires and preferences. Chinese children have no rights to infringe which is why Chinese daughters can't have boyfriends in high school and there are no late curfews or trips to sleep-away camps. Also even the slightest defiance or indignation anything less than unquestioning obedience is extinguished and punished into submission. Don't get me wrong it's not that Chinese parents don't care about their children. In fact just the opposite! Chinese parents give up anything and everything to help their children. They just have an entirely different parenting model.

10 Western propaganda often paints a portrait of Asian mothers as scheming indifferent militant people unconcerned with their kids' true interests. For their part many Chinese secretly believe they care more about their children and are willing to sacrifice more for them than Westerners who seem perfectly content to let their children turn out badly and shame their tradition and heritage. I think this is a misunderstanding on both sides. Of course there is also some overlap all decent parents want to do what's best for their children. It's the methodology that's different.

11 Westerners preach respecting the children's individuality encouraging them to pursue their true passions supporting their choices and providing a positive and nurturing environment. But while Western children may have a high opinion of themselves and glowing self-esteem how do they perform in the real world? Chinese parents protect their children by armoring them for the future letting them see what they're capable of and conferring upon them skills work habits and inner confidence that no one can ever take away. When the time comes to perform Chinese children have a blueprint for success; they know how to compete with the best the world has to offer. The proof is in the pudding!

﻿

A Western mother's response

1 In the days since the newspaper published the column by the Chinese mother I have thought of what I would say to her if I met her. I might point out as others have that Asian-American girls aged 15 to 24 have above average rates of suicide and eating disorders. I might question the arrogance of ascribing her child's success to the Chinese child-rearing techniques of criticism and name-calling when it could just as likely have resulted from genetic or economic blessings. But I have a feeling that she knows that.

2 More importantly if I did make such contentions I'd risk being called a liar by my own children. Sophie my oldest would remind me of the recent evening when I stared in stony silence at her report card sniffing in contempt at her father's happy congratulations.

3 "What?" she said. "I got 5 solid As."

4 I shrugged.

5 "Come on" my husband complained.

6 My daughter narrowed her eyes at me. She knew what was coming.

7 I pointed at the remaining three grades sociology biochemistry and intermediate aesthetics none a solid A. I certainly didn't think it warranted the "screaming hairtearing explosion" that the author informs us would have greeted the daughter of a Chinese mother. However I articulated my displeasure clearly enough. The word "garbage" was not uttered. But it was only because I feared my husband's reproach that I refrained from telling my own daughter when she collapsed in tears that she was acting like an idiot.

8 The difference I suppose between proud Chinese mothers and Western ones is that I felt ashamed that I didn't subordinate my anger to my pride in what she did accomplish. Admittedly (and I am ashamed to say this too) I also did not then go out and get hundreds of practice tests and work through them with my daughter far into the night doing whatever it took to get her the A. I would leave those tasks for a tutor to administer.

9 I am actually grateful to the author and for the insights she gave me. Reading her essay definitely put some Chinese iron into my Western spine and though I eventually apologized to my daughter for failing to acknowledge right off the bat all those tough classes last semester in which she had done phenomenally well and for expressing my disappointment at the others too vigorously I have also vowed that she will clamp down on those three subjects in which she is "underperforming". Her father and I are unanimous in this.

10 But Chinese methods I think do still need some scrutiny. My daughter Rosie is mildly dyslexic a learning difficulty that means she automatically reads words backward. By the time the psychiatrist diagnosed her in second grade she was lagging far behind her classmates. For years I forced her to spell words in the bathtub with foam letters to do worksheets to subdivide words into sounds and take practice tests. My criticism and forced rehearsing was redundant it turns out inside she was all ready to punish herself and I was only prolonging her misery and shattering her confidence. Eventually and totally out of character she even stopped loving school. She lost her sparkle. She started to suffer from constant stomachaches and broke down in tears almost every day. At last we heard about a reading program where students spent four hours every day in a small room under a supervisor with a specialization in dyslexia drilling in letters and sight words. It sounded awful but Rosie insisted on it. She loved books and stories. She wanted to read.

11 Every day when we picked her up her face would be red with tears her eyes hollow and exhausted. Every day we asked her if she wanted to quit. Neither her father nor I wanted to make a unilateral decision when she was the one who suffered so we asked her. But every day she returned to the trenches her little shoulders bent under the weight of her struggle. Rosie has a process she follows when she's scared "Overcome your fears" she whispers to herself. I don't know where she learned it. Maybe from one of those television shows I shouldn't let her watch.

12 At the end of a grim and brutal month Rosie learned to read. Not because we sat like watchdogs and forced her to drill and practice and repeat not because we dragged her kicking and screaming or denied her food or kept her from using the bathroom but because she forced herself. Because of this she emerged with a conception of herself as a powerful versatile person.

13 I have a feeling when Chinese children are underdeveloped or suffer from learning disabilities like Rosie's their parents channel their admirable passion into finding a solution that works. They are just as dogged and determined but in an entirely different way. In some scenarios roaring like a tiger turns children into pianists who debut at Carnegie Hall but in others it only limits constricts and reins them in. Positive enthusiasm gives some the excuse to fail and others the chance to succeed. Wherever we reside on our big green blue planet Chinese mothers and I both understand that our job as mothers is to be the type of tigress that each of our different children needs.

Love and logic: The story of a fallacy

1 I had my first date with Polly after I made the trade with my roommate Rob. That year every guy on campus had a leather jacket and Rob couldn't stand the idea of being the only football player who didn't so he made a pact that he'd give me his girl in exchange for my jacket. He wasn't the brightest guy. Polly wasn't too shrewd either.

2 But she was pretty well-off didn't dye her hair strange colors or wear too much makeup. She had the right background to be the girlfriend of a dogged brilliant lawyer. If I could show the elite law firms I applied to that I had a radiant well-spoken counterpart by my side I just might edge past the competition.

3 "Radiant" she was already. I could dispense her enough pearls of wisdom to make her "well-spoken".

4 After a banner day out I drove until we were situated under a big old oak tree on a hill off the expressway. What I had in mind was a little eccentric. I thought the venue with a perfect view of the luminous city would lighten the mood. We stayed in the car and I turned down the stereo and took my foot off the brake pedal. "What are we going to talk about?" she asked.

5 "Logic."

6 "Cool" she said over her gum.

7 "The doctrine of logic" I said "is a staple of clear thinking. Failures in logic distort the truth and some of them are well known. First let's look at the fallacy Dicto Simpliciter."

8 "Great" she agreed.

9 "Dicto Simpliciter means an unqualified generalization. For example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise."

10 She nodded in agreement.

11 I could see she was stumped. "Polly" I explained "it's too simple a generalization. If you have say heart disease or extreme obesity exercise is bad not good. Therefore you must say exercise is good for most people."

12 "Next is Hasty Generalization. Self-explanatory right? Listen carefully: You can't speak French. Rob can't speak French. Looks like nobody at this school can speak French."

13 "Really?" said Polly amazed. "Nobody?"

14 "This is also a fallacy" I said. "The generalization is reached too hastily. Too few instances support such a conclusion."

15 She seemed to have a good time. I could safely say my plan was underway. I took her home and set a date for another conversation.

16 Seated under the oak the next evening I said "Our first fallacy tonight is called Ad Misericordiam."

17 She nodded with delight.

18 "Listen closely" I said. "A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are he says he has six children to feed."

19 "Oh this is awful awful" she whispered in a choked voice.

20 "Yes it's awful" I agreed "but it's no argument. The man never answered the boss's question. Instead he appealed to the boss's sympathy Ad Misericordiam."

21 She blinked still trying hard to keep back her tears.

22 "Next" I said carefully "we will discuss False Analogy. An example students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during exams because surgeons have X-rays to guide them during surgery."

23 "I like that idea" she said.

24 "Polly" I groaned "don't derail the discussion. The inference is wrong. Doctors aren't taking a test to see how much they have learned but students are. The situations are altogether different. You can't make an analogy between them."

25 "I still think it's a good idea" said Polly.

26 With five nights of diligent work I actually made a logician out of Polly. She was an analytical thinker at last. The time had come for the conversion of our relationship from academic to romantic.

27 "Polly" I said when next we sat under our oak "tonight we won't discuss fallacies."

28 "Oh?" she said a little disappointed.

29 Favoring her with a grin I said "We have now spent five evenings together. We get along pretty well. We make a pretty good couple."

30 "Hasty Generalization" said Polly brightly. "Or as a normal person might say that's a little premature don't you think?"

31 I laughed with amusement. She'd learned her lessons well far surpassing my expectations. "Sweetheart" I said patting her hand in a tolerant manner "five dates is plenty. After all you don't have to eat a whole cake to know it's good."

32 "False Analogy" said Polly promptly. "Your premise is that dating is like eating. But you're not a cake. You're a boy."

33 I laughed with somewhat less amusement hiding my dread that she'd learned her lessons too well. A few more false steps would be my doom. I decided to change tactics and try flattery instead.

34 "Polly I love you. Please say you'll go out with me. I'm nothing without you."

35 "Ad Misericordiam" she said.

36 "You certainly can discern a fallacy when you see it" I said my hopes starting to crumble. "But don't take them so literally. I mean this is all academic. You know the things you learn in school don't have anything to do with real life."

37 "Dicto Simpliciter" she said. "Besides you really should practice what you preach."

38 I leaped to my feet my temper flaring up. "Will you or will you not go out with me?"

39 "No to your proposition" she replied.

40 "Why?" I demanded.

41 "I'm more interested in a different petitioner Rob and I are back together."

42 With great effort I said calmly "How could you give me the axe over Rob? Look at me an ingenious student a tremendous intellectual a man with an assured future. Look at Rob a muscular idiot a guy who'll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one good reason why you should be with him?"

43 "Wow what presumption! I'll put it in a way someone as brilliant as you can understand" retorted Polly her voice dripping with sarcasm. "Full disclosure I like Rob in leather. I told him to say yes to you so he could have your jacket!"

﻿

Why do smart people do dumb things?

1 Orthodox views prize intelligence and intellectual rigor highly in the modern realm of universities and tech industry jobs. One of the underlying assumptions of this value system is that smart people by virtue of what they've learned will formulate better decisions. Often this is true. Yet psychologists who study human decision-making processes have uncovered cognitive biases common to all people regardless of intelligence that can lead to poor decisions in experts and laymen alike.

2 Thankfully these biases can be avoided. Understanding how and in what situations they occur can give you an awareness of your own limitations and allow you to factor them into your decision-making.

3 One of the most common biases is what is known as the fundamental attribution error. Through this people attribute the failures of others to character flaws and their own to mere circumstance subconsciously considering their own characters to be stainless. "Jenkins lost his job because of his incompetence; I lost mine because of the recession." It also leads us to attribute our own success to our qualifications discounting luck while seeing others' success as the product of mere luck.

4 In other words we typically demand more accountability from others than we do from ourselves. Not only does this lead to petty judgments about other people it also leads to faulty risk assessment when you assume that certain bad things only happen to others. For example you might assume without evidence that the price of your house will go up even though 90 percent of them have dropped in price because you yourself are more competent.

5 Confirmation bias is sometimes found together with fundamental attribution error. This one has two parts. First we tend to gather and rely upon information that only confirms our existing views. Second we avoid or veto things that refute our preexisting hypotheses.

6 For example imagine that you suspect your computer has been hacked. Every time it stalls or has a little error you assume that it was triggered by a hacker and that your suspicions are valid. This bias plays an especially big role in rivalries between two opposing views. Each side partitions their own beliefs in a logic-proof loop and claims their opponent is failing to recognize valid points. Outwitting confirmation bias therefore requires exploring both sides of an argument with equal diligence.

7 Similar to confirmation bias is the overconfidence bias. In an ideal world we could be correct 100 percent of the time we were 100 percent sure about something correct 80 percent of the time we were 80 percent sure about something and so on. In reality people's confidence vastly exceeds the accuracy of those judgments. This bias most frequently comes into play in areas where someone has no direct evidence and must make a guess estimating how many people are in a crowded plaza for example or how likely it will rain. To make matters worse even when people are aware of overconfidence bias they will still tend to overstate the chances that they are correct. Confidence is no prophet and is best used together with available evidence. When witnesses are called to testify in a court trial the confidence in their testimony is measured along with and against the evidence at hand.

8 The availability bias is also related to errors in estimation in that we tend to estimate what outcome is more likely by how easily we can recount an example from memory. Since the retention and retrieval of memories is biased toward vivid sensational or emotionally charged examples decisions based on them can often lead to strange inaccurate conclusions.

9 In action this bias might lead someone to cancel a trip to for example the Canary Islands because of a report that the biggest plane crash in history happened there. Likewise some people might stop going out at night for fear of assault or rape.

10 Repelling the availability bias calls for an empirical approach to a particular decision one not based on the obscured reality of vivid memory. If there is a low incidence of disaster like only one out of 100000 plane landings results in a crash it is safe to fly to the Canary Islands. If one out of one million people who go out is assaulted it is safe to go out at night.

11 The sunk cost fallacy has a periodic application and was first identified by economists. A good example of how it works is the casino slot machine. Gamblers with a high threshold for risk put money into a slot machine hoping for a big return but with each pull of the lever they lose some money playing the odds. If they have been pulling the lever many times in a row without success they might decide that they had better keep spending money at the machine or they will have wasted everything they already put in.

12 The truth is that every pull of the lever has the same winning probability of nearly one in a trillion regardless of how much money has been put in before the previous plays were sunk costs.

13 In everyday life this can lead people to stay in damaging situations because of how much they have already put in stuck on the erroneous belief that the value of that time or energy they have invested will decay or disappear if they leave. The wisest course is to recognize the effects of the sunk cost fallacy and to leave a bad situation regardless of how much you have already invested.

14 While there are still more biases the key to avoiding them remains the same: When a decision matters it is best to rely on watertight logic and a careful examination of the evidence and to remain aware that what seems like good intuition is always subject to errors of judgment.

The confusing pursuit of beauty

1 If you're a man at some point a woman will ask you how she looks.

2 You must be careful how you answer this question. The best technique is to form an honest yet sensitive response then promptly excuse yourself for some kind of emergency. Trust me this is the easiest way out. No amount of rehearsal will help you come up with the right answer.

3 The problem is that men do not think of their looks in the same way women do. Most men form an opinion of themselves in seventh grade and stick to it for the rest of their lives. Some men think they're irresistibly desirable and they refuse to change this opinion even when they grow bald and their faces visibly wrinkle as they age.

4 Most men I believe are not arrogant about their looks. If the transient thought passes through their minds at all they like to think of themselves as average-looking. Being average doesn't bother them; average is fine. They don't affix much value to their looks or think of them in terms of aesthetics. Their primary form of beauty care is to shave themselves which is essentially the same care they give to their lawns. If at the end of his four minute allotment of time for grooming a man has managed to wipe most of the shaving cream out of the strands of his hair and isn't bleeding too badly he feels he's done all he can.

5 Women do not look at themselves this way. If I had to guess what most women think about their appearance it would be: "Not good enough." No matter how attractive a woman may be her perception of herself is eclipsed by the beauty industry. She has trouble thinking "I'm beautiful." She magnifies the smallest imperfections in her body and imagines them as glaring flaws the whole world will notice and ridicule.

6 Why do women consider their looks so deficient? This chronic insecurity isn't inborn but created through the interaction of many complex psychological and societal factors beginning with the dolls we give them as children. Girls grow up playing with dolls proportioned so that if they were human they would be seven feet tall and weigh 61 pounds with tiny thighs and a large upper body. This is an absurd standard to live up to especially when you consider the size of the doll's waist a relative measurement physically impossible for a living human to achieve. Contrast this absurd standard with that presented to little boys with their "action figures". Most of the toys that young boys have played with were weird-looking like the one called Buzz-Off that was part human part flying insect. This guy was not a looker but he was still extremely self-confident. You could not imagine him saying to the others "Is this accessory the right shade of violet for this outfit?"

7 But women grow up thinking they need to look like Barbie dolls or girls on magazine covers which for most women is impossible. Nonetheless the multibillion-dollar beauty industry complete with its own aisle in the grocery store is devoted to constant warfare on female self-esteem convincing women that they must buy all the newest moisturizing creams bronzing powders and appliances that promise to "stimulate and restore" their skin. I once saw an Oprah Show in which supermodel Cindy Crawford dispensed makeup tips to the studio audience. Cindy had all these middle-aged women apply clay masks and other "wrinkle-removing" products to their faces; she stressed how important it was to adhere to the guidelines like applying products via the tips of their fingers to protect elasticity. All the women dutifully did this even though it was obvious to any rational observer that no matter how carefully they applied these products they would never have Cindy Crawford's face or complexion.

8 I'm not saying that men are superior. I'm just saying that you're not going to get a group of middle-aged men to plaster cosmetics to themselves under the instruction of Brad Pitt in hopes of looking more like him. Men don't face the same societal focus purely on physical beauty and they're encouraged to reach out to other characteristics to promote their self-esteem. They might say to Brad: "Oh yeah? Well what do you know about lawn care pretty boy?"

9 Of course women argue that they become obsessed with appearance as a reaction to pressure from men. The truth is that most men think beauty is more than just lipstick and perfume and take no notice of these extra details. I have never once in more than 40 years of listening to men talk about women heard a man say "She had gorgeous fingernails!" To most men little things like fingernails are all homogeneous anyway and one woman's flawless pink polish is exactly as invisible as another's bare nails.

10 By participating in this system of extreme conformity women are actually opening themselves up to the scrutiny of other women the only ones qualified to judge their efforts. What is the real benefit of working this hard to appease men who don't notice when it only exposes women to prosecution from other women?

11 Anyway to get back to my original point: If you're a man and a woman asks you how she looks you can't say she looks bad without receiving immediate and well-deserved outrage. But you also can't shower her with empty compliments about how her shoes complement her dress nicely because she'll know you're lying. She has spent countless hours worrying about the differences between her looks and Cindy Crawford's. Also she suspects that you're not qualified to voice a subjective opinion on anybody's appearance. This may be because you have shaving cream in your hair and inside the folds of your ears.

﻿

Making the choice to be truly beautiful

1 Extreme makeovers are all the rage these days with too many people addicted to Botox injection parties and reality shows. Plastic surgery is on the rise. Many people are trying to match the extraordinary measures actors and actresses go through to look perfect on the screen. Yet the shortcuts to create biomedical happiness by having surgery taking supplements or dieting don't usually fulfill their promise. Besides beautiful people are not automatically happy people.

2 Attaining the highest degree of your beauty is not about looking good during social interaction or physiological perfection and you can't get there via technology. It's a growth process a transformation of self through awareness and learning. It's about meaning and being real. It's an emotional and spiritual walk and it requires faith fueled with liberal doses of loving kindness.

3 Every day I have the delight and privilege of loving Richard my husband a real human emotionally accessible man. We're about the same age and our looks have corroded a bit over time. After almost 20 years though we have grown together in ways that go far deeper than the surface of our skin. Our life is lovely even if it doesn't match the criterion of love in movie fantasies. We laugh together we share the struggles of daily life together and the thought that he might die before I do fills me with dread. All the muscle-bound male models in the world couldn't replace my very own sensual outgoing friend. It took me 37 years to find him and I'm not about to replace him with the so-called "esthetic perfection".

4 I work as a psychotherapist and clients come to my office every day scarred with emotional pain because their lives aren't "perfect" enough. They feel inadequate hopeless and frustrated with jealousy because they can't attain life as they see it on the big screen. It helps when I preface our sessions with the mention that tens of thousands of dollars go into every second of media they see that stars have dozens of people devoted exclusively to making them look good (even when they're naked) that the effort of maintaining their images is an exhausting full-time job. The "beautiful" people in the media are under enormous pressure to maintain their looks and for some reason my clients don't realize that they're exempt from that predominant pressure.

5 I underscore that all the face creams physical workouts dietary fads Prozac capsules and meditation regiments in the world aren't going to make their lives their bodies or their mental state much better. In fact they often hamper happiness by distracting from the things that lead to real inner beauty. Life is not about maintaining some young and stylish outward costume to hide behind. It's about growing and deepening your soul.

6 The only way I know to develop my soul is through feelings. Witnessing natural phenomena the star-lit galaxy a centuries-old redwood the symphony of birds' songs in spring stretches it making me feel humble and majestic all at the same time. Human relationships bruise collide and comfort teaching me maturity and passion. Love urges my soul to blossom and glow affection elicits feelings of eternity and so I learn to accept others as they are.

7 The humans in my life are not the barren self-absorbed "beautiful people" of the screen. We're ordinary real imperfect people. Together we work hard stumbling through life trying to be our best selves knitting together families and friendships and striving to illuminate the world with our personal ethics and aspirations.

8 We come from numerous backgrounds and we don't always approve of each other's decisions but we care for each other the best we can. We struggle to be less self-indulgent more compassionate and understanding. We try to resist the lure of novelty fads the manipulations of advertising. We survive through social phenomena that we don't agree with through interwoven natural and unnatural disasters that take our loved ones and possessions through fads and fancies that are often unhealthy. From each event we learn we stretch we sometimes fracture we process the emotional outcome and we move on. These life events are the soul's workout and though we may groan and complain we can feel the growth eventually.

9 The secret is that this growth is visible to others and the effort registers on one's entire being. It becomes an authentic element that makes the spirit glow radiantly like that of a saint. Have you ever seen an elderly person like that one whose wisdom shows in his eyes and whose love is evident as he gently enquires about your health or offers a brief sentiment that calms and affirms? The spirit that shines from within this person is true beauty and it can't be bought in a jar.

10 The miracle is that each of us has the total capacity to achieve this perspective this fullest embodiment of the highest expression of soul even as our mortal bodies wear out and degenerate.

11 In other words true beauty is not about looks. It's about choices. As we move through life and grow through each of its checkpoints we should seek out and build the kinds of experiences that reveal and purify our divine inner beauty. We must look at our own lives and decisions from a more valuable perspective than the media's shallow eye.

12 The decisions we make today affect the rest of our lives. We ourselves are ultimately the only people to whom we are accountable and for whom we are responsible. Each new decision we make can be a new resolution to build the beautiful future we long to have.

Fred Smith and FedEx: The vision that changed the world

1 Every night several hundred planes bearing a purple white and orange design touch down at Memphis Airport in Tennessee. What precedes this landing are package pick-ups from locations all over the United States earlier in the day. Crews unload the planes' cargo of more than half a million parcels and letters. The rectangular packages and envelopes are rapidly reshuffled and sorted according to address then loaded onto other aircraft and flown to their destinations to be dispersed by hand many within 24 hours of leaving their senders. This is the culmination of a dream of Frederick W. Smith the founder president chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the FedEx Corp. known originally as Federal Express the largest and most successful overnight delivery service in the world. Conceived when he was in college and now in its 28th year of operation Smith's exquisite brainchild has become the standard for door-to-door package delivery.

2 Recognized as an outstanding entrepreneur with an agreeable and winning personality Smith is held in high regard by his competitors as well as his employees and stockholders. Fred Smith was just 27 when he founded FedEx. Now so many years later he's still the "captain of the ship". He attributes the success of the company simply to leadership something he deduced from his years in the military and from his family.

3 Frederick Wallace Smith was born into a wealthy family clan on August 11 1944 in Mississippi. His father died when he was just four years old. As a juvenile Smith was an invalid suffering from a disease that left him unable to walk normally. He was picked on by bullies and he learned to defend himself by swinging at them with his alloy walking stick. Cured of the disease by the age of l0 he became a star athlete in high school playing football basketball and baseball.

4 Smith's passion was flying. At 15 he was operating a crop-duster over the skyline of the Mississippi Delta a terrain so flat that there was little need for radar navigation. As a student at Yale University he helped revive the Yale flying club; its alumni had populated naval aviation history including the famous "Millionaires' Unit" in World War I. Smith administrated the club's business end and ran a small charter operation in New Haven.

5 With his study time disrupted by flying his academic performance suffered but Smith never stopped looking for his own "big idea". He thought he had found it when he wrote a term paper for an economics class. He drafted a prototype for a transportation company that would guarantee overnight delivery of small time-sensitive goods such as replacement parts and medical supplies to major US regions. The professor wasn't impressed and told Smith he couldn't quantify the idea and clearly it wasn't feasible.

6 However Smith was certain he was onto something even though several more years elapsed before he could turn his idea into reality. In the interim he graduated from Yale in 1966 just as America's involvement in the Vietnam War was deepening. Since he was a patriot and had attended officers' training classes he joined the Marines.

7 Smith completed two tours in Vietnam eventually flying more than 200 missions. "In the military leadership means getting a group of people to subordinate their individual desires and ambitions for the achievement of organizational goals" Smith says fusing together his military and business experiences. "And good leadership has very measurable effects on a company's bottom line."

8 Home from Vietnam Smith became fascinated by the notion that if you connected all the points of a network through an intermediary hub the streamlined efficiency could be enormous compared to other disjointed decentralized businesses whether the system involved moving packages and letters or people and planes. He decided to take a stab at starting his own business. With an investment from his father's company as well as a chunk of his own inheritance Smith bought his first delivery planes and in 1971 formed the Federal Express.

9 The early days were underscored by extreme frugality and financial losses. It was not uncommon for FedEx drivers to pay for gasoline for their vans out of their own pockets. But despite such problems Smith showed concern for the welfare of his employees. Just as he recalled even when they didn't have the money even when there weren't couches in the office and electric typewriters they still set the precedent to ensure a good medical and dental plan for their people.

10 Along the way FedEx pioneered centralization and the "hub and spoke" system which has since been adopted by almost all major airlines. The phrase FedEx it has become a fixture in our language as much as Xerox or Google.

11 Smith says success in business boils down to three things. First you need to have appealing product or service and a compelling strategy. Then you need to have an efficient management system. Assuming you have those things leading a team is the single most important issue in running an organization today.

12 Although Smith avoids the media and the trappings of public life he is said to be a friendly and accessible employer. He values his people and never takes them for granted. He reportedly visits FedEx's Memphis site at night from time to time and addresses sorters by name. For years he extended an offer to any courier with 10 years of service to come to Memphis for an "anniversary breakfast". That embodies Fred Smith's philosophy: People Service Profit (P-S-P). Smith says "The P-S-P philosophy is like an unbroken circle or chain. There are no clearly definable points of entry or exit. Each link upholds the others and is in turn supported by them." In articulating this philosophy and in personally involving himself in its implementation Frederick Smith is the forerunner of the new sphere of leadership that success in the future will demand.

Building the dream of Starbucks

1 Howard Schultz is not a household name to most North Americans but those living in urban or suburban communities know his company: the specialty coffee retailer Starbucks. With impressive velocity Starbucks has grown into the largest coffee roaster and retailer of specialty coffee in North America in a span of only a decade. By 2000 its coffee houses could be found in more than 3000 locations worldwide; even President Bill Clinton was seen in a snapshot with a Starbucks brew in his hand. According to the US weekly magazine Newsweek Schultz's merging of the three Cs coffee commerce and community surely ranks as one of the '90s greatest retail successes.

2 Schultz was born in 1953 and grew up in an extremely poor section of the Brooklyn borough of New York City. His mother worked as a receptionist and his father held a variety of jobs none of which offered decent pay or medical insurance. When Schultz was seven his father lost his job as a delivery driver when he broke his ankle in an accident. In the ensuing months the family was literally too poor to put food on the table.

3 During his youth Schultz was hounded by the shame of his family's "working poor" status. He escaped the hot Brooklyn summer one year to attend camp but would not return when he learned it was for low-income families. He was teased by boys in high school and ashamed to tell his girlfriend where he lived. The harsh memories of those early times stayed with him for the rest of his life.

4 Sports became an escape from the shame of poverty. Schultz earned an athletic scholarship to Northern Michigan University in 1975. He was the first person in his family to graduate from college as none of his predecessors had training beyond vocational school.

5 The bud of inspiration for his phenomenal coffee business began growing in a 1983 visit to Milan Italy. Schultz conceived of a new American way of life in the coffee bars of Milan. He sought to recreate such forums for people in the US to start their days or visit with friends. In 1987 at the age of 34 Schultz organized a group of investors and purchased the company that had formerly employed him the Starbucks Coffee Company in Seattle which he restructured as the Starbucks Corporation.

6 The public verdict was overwhelmingly positive. Schultz's premium coffee bars were an instant success acting as a stimulus of rapid growth and expansion not only for Starbucks but also for the coffee industry around the world. In 1992 Starbucks became the first specialty coffee company to go public affirming its magnitude and prospects.

7 Starbucks' first major venture outside of the northwestern part of the nation was Chicago where the company's specialty sales division developed new business with department stores and established Starbucks coffee bars adjacent to the business sections in national bookstores. Starbucks also formed a partnership with PepsiCo to create and distribute a new ready-to-drink coffee-based beverage and entered into a licensing agreement with Kraft Foods. As a company seeking to develop with a multilateral approach Starbucks even developed a relationship with the music industry to sell Starbucks-tailored CDs of classical brass and orchestral music in the coffee bars.

8 When Starbucks opened its first store in New York City it was a homecoming for Schultz but he did not act like the head of the reigning royalty of coffee he had become. The New York Times commented "The soft-spoken Mr. Schultz has barely a trace of a New York accent and a timid almost apologetic manner."

9 Schultz has also attracted considerable attention with his unconventional employment policies. He wanted to give Starbucks' employees both a philosophical and a financial stake in the business. He decreed that employees who worked the quota of 20 hours a week or more were eligible for medical dental and optical coverage as well as for stock options. At a time when other companies were trimming benefits as a cost-cutting measure Schultz who grew up in a family without any medical coverage was vocal in his belief that genuinely caring about your employees is critical to building a sturdy workforce. "Service is a lost art in America" he told The New York Times. "I think people want to do a good job but if they are treated poorly they get beaten down. We want to provide our people with dignity and self-esteem and we can't do that with lip service." Starbucks stipulates that every employee with at least half-time hours can receive health-care benefits. Schultz credits the utilization of such a benefits policy as the key to the company's growth because it has given Starbucks a more dedicated workforce and an extremely high level of customer service. The chain also achieved a dramatically low turnover rate half that of the average fast food business. This creates a significant numerical payoff for Starbucks since each new employee represents an expenditure of $3000 in recruiting and training costs and productivity losses.

10 Schultz has remained firmly committed to employee and community enrichment a philosophy which is embedded in the very core of Starbucks' business culture. He has never grown accustomed to success enough to forget his working-class roots. He dedicated his book to the memory of his father whom he had once spoken harshly to and accused of a lack of ambition. They were words Schultz would regret the rest of his life a reminiscence he wished he could scrub from his memory. His father received the diagnosis of lung cancer and died before his son became a millionaire. Schultz once told his audience that his crowning success was that "I got to build the kind of company that my father never got to work for."

Achieving sustainable environmentalism

1 Environmental sensitivity is now as required an attitude in polite society as is say belief in democracy or disapproval of plastic surgery. But now that everyone from Ted Turner to George H. W. Bush has claimed love for Mother Earth how are we to choose among the dozens of conflicting proposals regulations and laws advanced by congressmen and constituents alike in the name of the environment? Clearly not everything with an environmental claim is worth doing. How do we segregate the best options and consolidate our varying interests into a single sound policy?

2 There is a simple way. First differentiate between environmental luxuries and environmental necessities. Luxuries are those things that would be nice to have if costless. Necessities are those things we must have regardless. Call this distinction the definitive rule of sane environmentalism which stipulates that combating ecological change that directly threatens the health and safety of people is an environmental necessity. All else is luxury.

3 For example preserving the atmosphere stopping ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect is an environmental necessity. Recently scientists reported that ozone damage is far worse than previously thought. Ozone depletion has a correlation not only with skin cancer and eye problems it also destroys the ocean's ecology the beginning of the food chain atop which we humans sit.

4 The possible thermal consequences of the greenhouse effect are far deadlier: melting ice caps flooded coastlines disrupted climate dry plains and ultimately empty breadbaskets. The American Midwest feeds people at all corners of the atlas. With the planetary climate changes are we prepared to see Iowa take on New Mexico's desert climate or Siberia take on Iowa's moderate climate?

5 Ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect are human disasters and they are urgent because they directly threaten humanity and are not easily reversible. A sane environmentalism the only kind of environmentalism that will strike a chord with the general public begins by openly declaring that nature is here to serve human beings. A sane environmentalism is entirely a human focused regime: It calls upon humanity to preserve nature but merely within the parameters of self-survival.

6 Of course this human focus runs against the grain of a contemporary environmentalism that indulges in overt earth worship. Some people even allege that the earth is a living organism. This kind of environmentalism likes to consider itself spiritual. It is nothing more than sentimental. It takes for example a highly selective view of the kindness of nature one that is incompatible with the reality of natural disasters. My nature worship stops with the twister that came through Kansas or the dreadful rains in Bangladesh that eradicated whole villages and left millions homeless.

7 A non-sentimental environmentalism is one founded on Protagoras's idea that "Man is the measure of all things." In establishing the sovereignty of man such a principle helps us through the dense forest of environmental arguments. Take the current debate raging over oil drilling in a corner of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Environmentalist coalitions mobilizing against a legislative action working its way through the US Congress for the legalization of such exploration propagate that Americans should be preserving and economizing energy instead of drilling for it. This is a false either-or proposition. The US does need a sizable energy tax to reduce consumption. But it needs more production too. Government estimates indicate a nearly fifty-fifty chance that under the ANWR rests one of the five largest oil fields ever discovered in America. It seems illogical that we are not finding safe ways to drill for oil in the ANWR.

8 The US has just come through a war fought in part over oil. Energy dependence costs Americans not just dollars but lives. It is a bizarre sentimentalism that would deny oil that is peacefully attainable because it risks disrupting the birthing grounds of Arctic caribou.

9 I like the caribou as much as the next person. And I would be rather sorry if their mating patterns were disturbed. But you can't have your cake and eat it too. And in the standoff of the welfare of caribou versus reducing an oil reliance that gets people killed in wars I choose people over caribou every time.

10 I feel similarly about the spotted owl in Oregon. I am no enemy of the owl. If it could be preserved at a negligible cost I would agree that it should be biodiversity is after all necessary to the ecosystem. But we must remember that not every species is needed to keep that diversity. Sometimes aesthetic aspects of life have to be sacrificed to more fundamental ones. If the cost of preserving the spotted owl is the loss of livelihood for 30000 logging families I choose the families (with their saws and chopped timber) over the owl.

11 The important distinction is between those environmental goods that are fundamental and those that are not. Nature is our ward not our master. It is to be respected and even cultivated. But when humans have to choose between their own well-being and that of nature nature will have to accommodate.

12 Humanity should accommodate only when its fate and that of nature are inseparably bound up. The most urgent maneuver must be undertaken when the very integrity of humanity's habitat e.g. the atmosphere or the essential geology that sustains the core of the earth is threatened. When the threat to humanity is lower in the hierarchy of necessity a more modest accommodation that balances economic against health concerns is in order. But in either case the principle is the same: protect the environment because it is humanity's environment.

13 The sentimental environmentalists will call this saving nature with a totally wrong frame of mind. Exactly. A sane and intelligible environmentalism does it not for nature's sake but for our own.

﻿

What nature is telling you?

1 Let's sit down here all of us on the open prairie where we can't see a highway or a fence free from the debris of the city. Let's have no blankets to sit on but let our bodies converge with the earth the surrounding trees and shrubs. Let's have the vegetation for a mattress experiencing its texture its sharpness and its softness. Let us become like stones plants and trees. Let us be animals think and feel like animals.

2 This is my plea: Listen to the air. You can hear it feel it smell it taste it. We feel it between us as a presence presiding over the day. It is a good way to start thinking about nature and talking about it. To go further we must rather talk to it talk to the rivers to the lakes to the winds as to our relatives.

3 You have impaired our ability to experience nature in the good way as part of it. Even here we are conscious that somewhere beyond the marsh and its cranes somewhere out in those hills there are radar towers and highway overpasses. This land is so beautiful and strange that now some of you want to make it into a national park. You have not only contaminated the earth the rocks the minerals all of which you call "dead" but which are very much alive; you have even changed the animals which are part of us changed them into vulgar zoological mutations so no one can recognize them.

4 There is power in an antelope so you let it graze within your fences. But what power do you see in a goat or sheep prey animals with no defenses creatures that hold still while you slaughter them? There was great power in a wolf even in a fox. You have inverted nature and turned these noble animals into miniature lap dogs. Nature is bound by your ropes and whips and is obedient to your commands. You can't do much with a cat so you fix it alter it declaw it and even cut its vocal cords so that you can experiment on it in a laboratory without being disturbed by its cries.

5 You have also made all types of wild birds into chickens creatures with wings so impaired that they cannot fly. There are farms where you breed chickens for breast meat. Those birds are kept in low repressive cages forced to be hunched over all the time which makes the breast muscles very big. One loud noise and the chickens go mad killing themselves by flying against the walls of their cages. Having to spend all their lives stooped over makes an unnatural crazy no-good bird. It also makes unnatural detached no-good human beings.

6 That's where you've fooled yourselves. You have not only altered declawed and deformed your winged and four-legged cousins; you have done it concurrently to yourselves. You inject Botox or use plastic surgery synthetic make-up and countless drugs. You have filtered and remolded humans into executives sitting in boardrooms into office workers into time-clock punchers. Your homes are filled with families disconnected from one another but tied to one great entity television.

7 "Watch the ashes don't smoke you'll stain the curtains. Watch the goldfish bowl. Don't lean your head against the wallpaper; your hair may be greasy. Don't spill liquor on that table: You'll peel off its delicate finish. You should have wiped your boots; the floor was just cleaned. Don't don't don't …" That is absurd! We weren't made to endure this type of repression. You live in prisons which you have built for yourselves calling them "homes" offices factories.

8 Sometimes I think that even our pitiful small houses are better than your luxury mansions. Strolling a hundred feet to the outhouse on a clear wintry night through mud or snow that's one small link with nature. Or in the summer in the back country taking your time listening to the humming of the insects or the flapping of birds' wings the sun warming your bones through the nodding branches of trees; you don't even have that pleasure of coexistence with nature anymore.

9 You subscribe to the belief that everything must be germ free. No smells! Not even the good natural man and woman odors. Eradicate the smell from under your armpits from your skin. Rub it out and then spray some botanical odor on yourself stuff you can spend a lot of money on ten dollars an ounce so you know this has to smell good. Why do you keep such a distance from your bodies' functions cavities and smells that you've alienated yourselves from the natural world of which you are an integral part?

10 I think you are so afraid and intolerant of the world around you. You deplore the natural world; you don't want to see feel smell or hear it. The feelings of rain and snow on your face being numbed by an icy wind and warmed back up by a smoking fire coming out of a hot sweat bath and plunging into a cold stream these things are the spice of life but you don't want them anymore.

11 You're cage dwellers living in boxes which shut out the hot humidity of the summer and the chill of winter living inside a body that no longer has a scent. You're hearing the noise from the hi-fi instead of listening to the sounds of nature. You're watching actors on TV having a make-believe experience when you no longer experience anything for yourself. That's your way. It's no good.

Speaking Chinese in America

1 Once at a dinner on the Monterey Peninsula California my mother whispered to me confidentially: "Sau-sau (brother's wife) pretends too hard to be a polite recipient! Why bother with such nominal courtesy? In the end she always takes everything."

2 My mother acted like a waixiao an emigrant no longer patient with old taboos and courtesies. To prove her point she reached across the table to offer my elderly aunt from Beijing the last scallop from the garlic seafood dish along with the flank steak and the cucumber salad.

3 Sau-sau frowned. "B'yao zhen b'yao!" she cried patting her substantial stomach. I don't want it really I don't.

4 "Take it! Take it!" my mother scolded in Chinese as predictably as the lunar cycles.

5 "Full I'm already full" Sau-sau muttered weakly eying the scallop.

6 "Ai!" exclaimed my mother. "Nobody wants it. It will only rot!"

7 Sau-sau sighed acting as if she were doing my mother a favor by taking the scrap off the tray and sparing us the trouble of wrapping the leftovers in foil.

8 My mother turned to her brother an experienced Chinese magistrate visiting us for the first time. "In America a Chinese person could starve to death. If you don't breach the old rules of etiquette and say you want it they won't ask you again."

9 My uncle nodded and said he understood fully: Americans take things quickly because they have no time to be polite.

10 I read an article in The New York Times Magazine on changes in New York's little cultural colony of Chinatown where the author mentioned that the interwoven configuration of Chinese language and culture renders its speech indirect and polite. Chinese people are so "discreet and modest" the article started that there aren't even words for "yes" and "no".

11 Why do people keep fabricating these rumors? I thought. They describe us as though we were a tribe of those little dolls sold in Chinatown tourist shops heads moving up and down in contented agreement!

12 As any child of immigrant parents knows there is a special kind of double bind attached to knowing two languages. My parents for example spoke to me in both Chinese and English; I spoke back to them in English.

13 "Amy-ah!" they'd scold me.

14 "What?" I'd answer back.

15 "Do not question us when we call" they'd scold in Chinese. "It's not respectful."

16 "What do you mean?"

17 "Ai! Didn't we just tell you not to question?"

18 If I consider my upbringing carefully I find there was nothing discreet about the Chinese language I grew up with no censorship for the sake of politeness. My parents made everything abundantly clear in their consecutive demands: "Of course you will become a famous aerospace engineer" they prodded. "And yes a concert pianist on the side."

19 It seems that the more forceful proceedings always spilled over into Chinese: "Not that way! You must wash rice so not a single grain is lost."

20 Having listened to both Chinese and English I'm suspicious of comparisons between the two languages as I notice the reciprocal challenges they each present. English speakers say Chinese is extremely difficult because different words can be denoted by very subtle variations in tone. English is often bracketed with the label of inconsistency a language of too many broken rules.

21 Even more dangerous in my view is the temptation to view the gulf between different languages and behavior in translation. To listen to my mother speak English an outside spectator might make the deduction that she has no concept of the temporal differences of past and future or that she is gender blind because she refers to my husband as "she". If one were not careful one might also generalize that all Chinese people take an indirect route to get to the point. It is rather my mother's individual tendency to ornament her language and wander around a bit.

22 I worry that the dominant society may see Chinese people from a limited perspective hedging us in with the stereotype. I worry that the seemingly innocent stereotype may lead to actual intolerance and be part of the reason why there are few Chinese in top management positions or in the main judiciary or political sectors. I worry about the power of language: If one says anything enough times it might become true with or without malicious intent.

23 Could this be why the Chinese friends of my parents' generation are willing to accept the generalization?

24 "Why are you complaining?" one of them said to me. "If people think we are modest and polite let them think that. Wouldn't Americans appreciate such an honorary description?"

25 And I do believe that anyone would take the description as a compliment at first. But after a while it annoys as if the only things that people heard one say were what had been filtered through the sieve of social niceties: I'm so pleased to meet you. I've heard many wonderful things about you.

26 These remarks are not representative of new ideas honest emotions or considered thought. Like a piece of bread they are only the crust of the interaction or what is said from the polite distance of social contexts: greetings farewells convenient excuses and the like. This generalization therefore is not a true composite of Chinese culture but only a stereotype of our exterior behavior.

27 "So how does one say 'yes' and 'no' in Chinese?" my friends may ask carefully.

28 At this junction I do agree in part with The New York Times Magazine article. There is no one word for "yes" or "no" but not out of necessity to be discreet. If anything I would say the Chinese equivalent of answering "yes" or "no" is specific to what is asked.

29 Ask a Chinese person if he or she has eaten and he or she might say chrle (eaten already) or meiyou (have not).

30 Ask "Have you stopped beating your wife?" and the answer refers directly to the proposition being asserted or denied: stopped already still have not never beat have no wife.

31 What could be clearer?

﻿

Culture makes the business world go round

1 Edward Hall a leader in the field of intercultural studies famously said: "The single greatest barrier to business success is the one erected by culture." Can cultural differences have as big an impact on international business ventures as financial planning and visionary leadership? The surprising answer is: Yes!

2 A good example is the role of relationships in business dealings. While relationships play only a minor role in US business culture they play a major role in Asian African and Middle Eastern countries. In these cultures in varying degrees relationship building is like a torch that lights and guides the way for business to occur.

3 Let's take the example of Kevin Johnston a senior vice-president of a US company specializing in hospitality management. Kevin was put in charge of finalizing a merger with a company in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Virtually all of the complicated negotiations had been completed. What remained was a 3-day trip to the UAE for face-to-face meetings between the partners to sign the paperwork and close the deal.

4 Kevin was determined that nothing would detain him from succeeding. He sent out a memorandum across his company enthusiastically describing the planned merger with the UAE partners. Having compiled all the necessary documents and graphs with every figure and decimal in place and having prepared a thorough exposition certifying the quality of his company he packed his briefcase and headed for the UAE.

5 Kevin arrived in the UAE excited to seal the deal. He was treated with extraordinary hospitality: an elaborate hotel blue ribbon foods elegant convertibles with drivers to tour the city a parade of entertainment and beautiful gifts to commemorate the visit. He tried repeatedly to bring out his files open the conversation and get down to business. But surprisingly for the three days he spent in the UAE none of his Emirate colleagues seemed ready to hear his financial briefing. Each time Kevin tried to speak about the deal his prospective partners seemed to "kidnap" the conversation diverting it to other topics. They would inquire about his health his family or his views on education and other important issues.

6 Upon leaving the UAE Kevin felt exasperated and defeated. He hadn't been able to receive the thorough interrogation of the materials for which he had so carefully prepared. His progress toward closing the deal was exactly where it was when he left the US: nil.

7 The above case is a classic example of how a friction between different cultural expectations causes delay that if not handled appropriately will bring the deal to an abrupt end and leave both sides reeling. The substantial loss of revenue can never be refunded and can leave a struggling company falling without a parachute.

8 Kevin made the mistake of assuming that the "certifications" involved in sealing the deal were in his briefcase. He charged into the meetings like a bull. For many cultures a person's certifications are established not only by their accomplishments their education and abilities but also by more personal connections. In this case the UAE partners wanted to know if Kevin was a good man a family man a trustworthy man. This type of rating establishes a trusting relationship for them. Had Kevin patiently taken the time to establish relationships he would likely have been asked to share his carefully prepared documents and have closed the deal.

9 Sociologists agree that another key aspect influencing global business is the concept of face. Cross-cultural differences in the way we save face impact our perceptions of trust and respect which in turn impact our relationships and group cohesion.

10 Take the example of Ann a US manager who took a reactionary approach to cultural differences. Ann thought being a nominee for the leadership position with a sales team based in Singapore was a climax of her career. Ann tried to establish a working relationship with each team member. After a few weeks of working on team unification and solidarity presenting guidelines and offering sales advice she carefully compartmentalized goals for each member of the sales team.

11 Later when the team convened face-to-face for their first quarterly review meeting Ann after praising a Chinese team member boldly criticized and questioned a Korean trying to extract the exact reason why he was lagging so far behind on his goals. The meeting immediately lost its groove. The entire group became solemn and for the rest of the meeting remained polite but largely mute.

12 Clearly Ann was not familiar with the concept of saving face in other cultures. In US culture saving face exists but only minimally and tactful but straightforward speech is highly valued. US managers routinely speak freely about someone else's accomplishments or failures in open public settings such as during meetings. This is different in Asian cultures. Singling out an individual due to praise or criticism a daily habit amongst American managers may cause Asians to become uncomfortable or deeply embarrassed.

13 Ann needs to consider more culturally appropriate ways to support and motivate her team. Providing feedback especially negative feedback in more private settings will be helpful. Most of all she should work on giving more courteous and supportive praise and encouragement which will help move toward the unification and cohesion that high functioning teams need in order to be successful.

14 Around the world deeper structures such as relationship building and face saving are embedded in the values beliefs and behavior of a culture. They are much harder to understand than the glossary of terms in any culture's language phrase book. The advice is: Always ask for clarification and seek new insights. For business success it is essential to learn to mediate these deeper cultural differences. Though it may be a little complicated to incorporate them into your way of thinking and communicating it is well worth the effort!

The weight men carry

1 When I was a boy growing up off the grid in the Commonwealth of Virginia the men I knew labored with their bodies from the first rooster crow in the morning to sundown. They were marginal farmers shepherds just scraping by or welders steelworkers carpenters; they built cabinets dug ditches mined coal or drove trucks their forearms thick with muscle. They trained horses stocked furnaces made tires stood on assembly lines welding parts onto refrigerators or lubricating car engines. In the evenings and on weekends they labored equally hard working on their own small tract of land fixing broken-down cars repairing broken shutters and drafty windows. In their little free time they drowned their livers in beer from cheap copper mugs at a bar near the local brewery or racecourse.

2 The bodies of the men I knew were twisted and wounded in ways visible and invisible. Heavy lifting had given many of them spinal problems and appalling injuries. Some had broken ribs and lost fingers. Racing against conveyor belts had given some ulcers. Their ankles and knees ached from years of standing on concrete. Some had partial vision loss as the glow of the welding flame damaged their optic receptors. There were times studying them when I dreaded growing up. All around us the fathers always seemed older than the mothers. Men wore out sooner being martyrs of constant work. Only women lived into old age.

3 There were also soldiers and so far as I could tell they scarcely worked at all. But when the shooting started many of them would die for their patriotism in fields and forts of foreign outposts. This was what soldiers were for they were tools like a wrench a hammer or a screw.

4 These weren't the only destinies of men as I learned from having a few male teachers from reading books and from watching television. But the men on television the news commentators the lawyers the doctors the politicians who levied the taxes and the bosses who gave orders seemed as remote and unreal to me as the figures in old paintings. I could no more imagine growing up to become one of these sophisticated people than I could imagine becoming a sovereign prince.

5 A scholarship enabled me not only to attend college a rare enough feat in my social circle but even to traverse the halls of a historic university meant for the children of the rich. Here for the first time I met women who told me that men were guilty of having kept all the joys and privileges of the earth for themselves. I was puzzled and demanded clarification. What privileges? What joys? I thought about the grim wounded lives of most of the men back home. What had they allegedly stolen from their wives and daughters? The right to work five days a week 12 months a year for 30 or 40 years wedged in tight spaces in the textile mills or in the coal mines struggling to extract every last bit of coal from the rock-hard earth? The right to die in war? The right to fix every leak in the roof every gap in the fence? The right to pile banknotes high for a rich corporation in a city far away? The right to feel when the lay-off came or the mines shut down not only afraid but also ashamed?

6 In this alien world of the rich I was slow to understand the deep grievances of women. This was because as a boy I had envied them. Before college the only people I had ever known who were interested in art or music or literature the only ones who ever seemed to enjoy a sense of ease were the mothers and daughters. What's more they did not have to go to war. By comparison with the narrow compartmentalized days of fathers the comparatively lightweight work of mothers seemed expansive. They clipped coupons went to see neighbors or ran errands at school or at church. I saw their lives as through a telescope all twinkling stars and shafts of light missing the details that truly defined their days. No doubt had I taken a more deductive look at their lives I would have envied them less. I didn't see then what a prison a house could be since houses seemed to me brighter handsomer places than any factory. As such things were never spoken of I did not realize how often women suffered from men's bullying. Even then I could see how exhausting it was for a mother to cater all day to the needs of young children. But as a boy if I had to choose between tending a baby and tending a machine I think I would have chosen the baby.

7 So I was baffled when the women at college made a racket accusing me and my sex of having cornered the world's pleasures. They demanded to be emancipated from the bonds of sexism. I think my bafflement has been felt by other boys (and by girls as well) who grew up in dirt-poor farm country by the docks in the shadows of factories any place where the fates of men and women are symmetrically bleak and grim.

8 When the women I met at college thought about the joys and privileges of men they didn't see the sort of men I had known. These daughters of privileged Republican men wanted to inherit their fathers' power and lordship over the world. They longed for a say over their future. But so did I. The difference between me and these daughters was that they saw me because of my sex as destined from birth to become like their fathers and therefore as an enemy to their desires. But I knew better. I wasn't an enemy to their desires in fact or in feeling. I was an ally in their rebellion. If I had known then how to tell them so or how to be a mediator would they have believed me? Would they have known?

﻿

What does feminism really mean?

1 Imagine a world where skirts makeup and high heels are prohibited where men are forbidden from giving gifts to women where mothers ignore their children and where marriage and dating are obscene. It sounds nightmarish but this is the dogma many people have in mind when they hear the word "feminism". Feminists we're told hate men and want them dead. Or feminists want to switch places with men so women can work all day and men can all stay home and keep house. Or maybe feminists want to be like men: dress identically use the same toilets compete in the same sports leagues. If this definition is true it seems feminists would be the provocation for insurgencies across the whole of society breaking routines eradicating traditions and ruining everyone's lives in the process!

2 Fortunately that's not feminism! Feminists don't believe that women are better than men or that women need to become or displace men. True some feminists enjoy masculine pursuits like boxing but they don't want to eject men from society. Feminists have fathers brothers husbands and sons. Their lives are just as coiled up with those they love as anyone else's.

3 So what do feminists believe? Distilled to its essence feminism is the idea that men and women should have equal opportunities. A woman should be able to be a man's boss if she is as capable as any other manager or a man should be allowed to look after children if he has the interest and ability. Nobody should find the situation strange or call it "queer". In other words feminists believe in a world where no one feels colonized or oppressed because of the roles they fill.

4 In some countries gender equality remains far away. There are places where women aren't allowed to participate in government or public life where women are denied education and remain illiterate and places where women have to keep their hair and faces hidden or they will risk terrible lashes detention or even execution. There are places where young virgin girls with no judicial process to protect them are forced to marry old men and bear children against their will. There are places where women are not allowed to drive a car or sit in the same section as men when using public transit.

5 In comparison in some other parts of the world the rights of women have grown tremendously. In the United States modern women live downright luxurious lives compared to the Pilgrims in colonial times. And in the British Isles modern women are essentially equal to men compared to the time when the early kings sat upon their mighty thrones. Feminists men as well as women have fought hard to overthrow outdated discriminatory practices and win rights we now take for granted such as girls attending school women gaining the voting ballot and running in electoral races for the Senate women owning property women in sales earning equal commissions as men and women choosing whether or not to marry or have children. These rights have given women control over their own lives while increasing vastly the number of people in the workforce who discover new ideas and patent new inventions. Can you imagine life without female scientists inventors doctors teachers and writers?

6 With all the progress of the last decades it can be hard to see that there is still work to be done or to remember what was so difficult before. Modern women may raise a chorus of complaints that there are no confident men left and blame feminism. A modern man may long for the days when a wife would stay home with a spatula and a sponge cooking kidney beans and steak for dinner fascinated by his work stories. However he would be forgetting the need to make enough money to support his household alone.

7 Truthfully most of us are feminists to some degree. A man who believes that women should stick to working as transcribing secretaries or midwives and leave the "good" jobs to men with families is more feminist than a man who believes in strict segregation of the genders or who insists that a woman shouldn't leave the house or speak to strangers. A "trophy wife" who does nothing but apply eye liner and lipstick and go to parties is still feminist enough to believe she shouldn't be hostage to her husband unable to go to the police if he attacks her for telling him "no". Many of us are feminist indeed; we work in blended groups of men and women dividing tasks according to ability and interest read books without caring about the gender of the author and listen to female teachers as well as male ones with equal attention and respect.

8 Yet even the most feminist environments have barriers we need to tunnel through. For example we might criticize successful female solicitors for not devoting enough time to their families or look down on those women who stay home with children for not being ambitious enough to take up a career. We might look down on men who disobey female bosses for not being team players or look down on other men who obey the same bosses for acting insufficiently masculine.

9 These seem like small problems the lingering ghosts of greater issues but they're significant when they're happening to you. Culture isn't easy to change; even if you think a woman has every right to speak loudly and swear like pirates you might have trouble imagining that any man would date her. Or you might have trouble relaxing around a man who is comfortable making less money than his female friends. Clearly our thirst for equality must never be fully quenched. But feminism cannot become an appendix at the end of a history book or an artifact of a bygone epoch. We must remain vigilant if we hope for a continuance of the rights of women.

The coming energy crisis

1 Two hundred years ago the world experienced an energy revolution that launched the Industrial Age. Ever since then with the rapid increase of population density the industrialized world's thirst for energy has more than tripled. Petroleum and natural gas are exploited as versatile and high quality energy products. Uranium is also tapped to fuel nuclear reactors and provide atomic energy.

2 Cheap energy is the lifeblood of human society. But there is a dark side to the near monopoly of non-renewable fossil fuels like coal oil and natural gas along with controversial uranium to supply our growing energy demands. The supply of these fuels is physically limited and their use threatens our health and environment. Multiple international treaties have been proposed to limit the use of fossil fuels for this very reason. Fears of global warming aside burning fossil fuels releases chemicals and particulates that can cause breathing problems cancer as well as brain and nerve damage. Nuclear energy once hailed as "too cheap to meter" has never been economically successful when all costs are factored in. Furthermore public opinion polls show nuclear energy is too closely associated with disasters like the Chernobyl reactor meltdown and the Fukushima explosion and with the danger that rebel insurgents could do damage with the toxic waste. Inexpensive and seemingly abundant non-renewable energy from dead plants and extinct animals fueled the 20th century economy but geologists climatologists environmentalists and many others are warning that the honeymoon may soon be over.

3 At some indefinite time in the near future the last drop of oil lump of coal or wisp of natural gas will be collected from the earth. The eventual depletion of fossil fuels that hitherto proved so reliable has left us with no choice but to prepare for a new age of energy synthesis. Most certainly human demand for energy will not decrease or plateau but surge as world population grows to nine billion over the next 50 years. By the year 2020 world energy consumption is projected to show a linear increase of 50 percent.

4 How will we meet the sky-rocketing energy demands of the future? Until we perfect the technology of cold fusion we'll have to focus on the development and increased production of energy from renewable energy source sun wind water and so on. While renewable energy sources are promising an international confederation of scientists and engineers is working feverishly to overcome the various obstacles associated with these "new energy" technologies. The major challenge is to develop efficient and economically workable versions of these technologies.

5 Take solar energy for example. It is a good option because there is an unlimited supply of glittering sunlight. Making it work on a large scale however is much easier said than done. It would be cost prohibitive to take the intricate gadgets of solar energy from the fringe of "green" society to the mainstream for major world consumption. The solar apparatus itself is ready for many new business and consumer applications but it is way too expensive to replace the old combustion machinery of gears and motors with new electronic technology of semiconductors and transistors on a global or even a national scale.

6 Wind power which has been used effectively in some places for generations is also rapidly growing in the energy market. The principle behind it is that wind converts rotary force into electricity by turning the blades of the turbine clockwise or counterclockwise around an axis. Unfortunately wind power is very unreliable and its strength depends on local weather patterns temperature time of year and location. In addition to this unreliability wind power equipment is very expensive compared with other energy sources and won't become a viable alternative until we can slash the costs significantly. Also a "wind farm" requires enormous land clearing to produce significant amounts of energy.

7 Hydroelectric power is another source of clean and renewable energy. It can be harnessed by controlling the natural outflow of water with different methods. The most popular is through dams which unfortunately are no longer considered environmentally friendly. Most of the hydroelectric dams in the world are historically recent but all reservoirs eventually will fill up with mud and require very expensive excavation to clear them up to become useful again.

8 Biomass energy derived from plant and animal matter is still another renewable source being considered as a standby replacement for fossil fuels. Organic waste in the form of dead trees leaves animal corpses and food processing waste exists in abundance and can be used to produce energy. However there is no way to ventilate the direct burning of biomass as fuel without diffusing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These gases can pose a risk to the ozone layer increasing overall exposure of human beings to harmful UV rays from the sun. Besides it takes time and money to collect and transport biomass in its raw form to a central point for processing into fuel and the automation of such a process is too difficult. So for the time being biomass has too many costly drawbacks to be a workable alternative to fossil fuels.

9 Although renewable energies are not yet economically competitive with fossil fuels their price becomes more attractive when compared with the health and environmental costs associated with burning coal and oil. Perhaps the best solution to our growing energy challenges comes in a bulletin from the Union of Concerned Scientists: "Our society's future success cannot hinge on one single solution. The answer instead must come from a family of diverse energy technologies that share a unified purpose they do not deplete our natural resources or destroy our environment." Despite the difficulties it is important to remember that an energy crisis is approaching at supersonic speeds and will soon be upon us. In order to inaugurate a new era in energy we must act quickly and work toward international collaboration to find the most effective solutions to our energy problems.

A worldwide food crisis?

1 Historically only local governments worried about a widespread food crisis but today a sharp spike in food prices and the resulting food crisis can quickly become a worldwide phenomenon. Recent droughts along the equator and in Russia and Ukraine two countries which account for one-fourth of world wheat exports caused wheat prices to surge. Many worry the tight supply will cause inflationary prices. They fear the skyrocketing grain costs in 2007 which harshly struck the world's poor and led to food riots will recur.

2 Is their fear grounded? Consultancy firms measuring the status of commodities like wheat don't think so. Stocks of wheat are at sufficiently high levels and harvest turnout from other big producers like the US is expected to stay strong. So unlike in 2007 the supply situation isn't desperate meaning wheat prices should eventually calm down and level off.

3 However this rosy picture provides only temporary security. The bigger picture discloses a reality not so optimistic. Though current prices aren't as sky-high as in the panicked market of 2007 they're still at higher levels than before and are likely to stay that way. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development sees the average prices of products classified as essential such as grains vegetable oils and dairy products rising for the next decade.

4 It doesn't take an oracle to foretell that the fight to feed the world will be a huge challenge facing the global economy over the next 20 years. Food production is suffering from decades of neglect of agriculture a period when the sector was starved of the resources and technology it needed to keep up with rising world demand. Though more and more people are intrigued by the issue and there is a growing global consensus about the need for reform in farming we're really only at the beginning of a long expensive process of repairing world agricultural practices. That means food prices will stay high over the next several years as will the risk of dangerous price fluctuations like the current one with wheat.

5 Food isn't like garments or other products traded on world markets. The issue of food is filled with emotion. Intermittent uncertainty in food markets will animate people to act when they would otherwise remain calm. No country for example wants to run out of food or watch sky-high prices push people into poverty and malnourishment. That can lead to riots or even revolutions. When emotions are running high enough grain exporters and importers may take extreme measures to prevent a shortage like hoarding and panic-driven wholesale purchases. In other words the overreaction of market players will act like a pistol to the head creating a crisis when none should exist.

6 Will current prices stay high and volatile? Probably yes. There are enormous structural problems with the agriculture industry that have caused the great imbalance between supply and demand. These problems have a dual nature one part of it on the production side and the other on the consumption side.

7 On the production side global funding for rural infrastructure or technological research to keep yields growing has been very small well below what is needed to keep crises at bay and to meet our future food demands. But in the past whenever economists predicted massive shortages technological advances like higher-yield strains of wheat would overcome the difference and rescue civilizations from large-scale starvation.

8 On the consumption side citizens of wealthier countries have grown accustomed to consuming more food than they need and eating more costly types of food like meat. This means more grain gets turned into livestock feed instead of food for people. Add in the new demand for bio-fuels and you get a recipe for disaster. As an excerpt from a pamphlet by activist Peter Singer explains: " … the problem isn't that we are producing too little food; rather we're not eating the food we grow. Nearly 100 million tons of grain per year is turned into bio-fuel that goes into gas tanks. The problem is that we the relatively affluent have created a system of piracy where we consume four or five times as much food as would be possible if we were to actually eat the crops we grow directly."

9 How can we neutralize this problem and dodge the future crisis? The solution lies at the intersection of money and time. Councilors legislators and bureaucratic agencies of some countries like India and Senegal have had the foresight to realize this fact and are giving more subsidies to agriculture.

10 More than ever we need the appropriation of time and money away from the army and the militia and toward creating a coherent international plan to deal with hunger. We are about to rupture at the seams with the world population expected to grow by 2.3 billion between 2009 and 2050. It is estimated that feeding a population of nine billion would require a 70 percent increase in global food production between 2007 and 2050. Why such a discrepancy? The rapidly growing population not only needs more basic foods like grains but also enjoys foods higher up on the food chain like meat. They desire not only the basic essentials of life but also more sophisticated technologies like automobiles that use bio-fuels!

11 All signposts point to the need for food production in developing countries to almost double. To achieve this goal an enormous investment in agriculture from various sources is needed. Governmental agencies non-profit organizations agricultural scientists private investors and charitable donors all must partner together to build the capacity of the developing world to answer this tremendous need for food.

12 While we may not be seeing all the symptoms of a food shortage syndrome yet we must be clear-eyed in our on-going support of food production. The message is explicit: We are on a collision course. But the problem is soluble. Like climbing a staircase we must do it carefully and consistently if we are to reach our goal and prevent a global food crisis.

A meaningful life

1 The death of an angel of animal rights activism does not rate with that of a drugged-out rock star. So when Henry Spira died of cancer in September 1998 his death passed without notice apart from a brief obituary in The New York Times. Yet Henry Spira's life tells us something important not only about the modern animal movement but about the possibility of an individual making a difference in the modern world.

2 I first met Henry when he turned up at an adult education seminar I was giving at New York University. I offered a course on "Animal Liberation" that attracted about 20 students. One student was an unusual specimen outside the regular aesthetic of an "animal person. His clothes were untidy and his hair uncombed. His language was so blunt and earthy that at times I thought I was listening to an assassin from a violent mob. Yet I couldn't help feeling intrigued with his direct way of speaking and his solemn secular oath to help animals in need.

3 I left New York soon after that but one day got a call from Henry. He talked with me about his work. I knew that for over a century the animal rights movement had been putting out graphic brochures leaflets and audio propaganda alerting people to the dreadful experiments on animals. But in all that time the number of animals used in experiments had risen from a small batch of a few hundred to more than 30 million. No activist had managed to stop a single experiment or improve the lives of animals living in tiny constricted enclosures. Henry changed that. One of his earliest campaigns permanently closed down a laboratory conducting experiments with toxic vapor on about 60 rabbits.

4 Following that success Henry rapidly moved on to bigger targets. He laid siege to Revlon over their use of rabbits to test cosmetics for potential eye damage and exerted enough pressure to persuade them to put $750000 into the search for alternatives. Having seen the boycott that Revlon had narrowly averted and being afraid of incurring similar wrath Avon Bristol-Myers and other major cosmetics corporations soon followed suit. Though it took 10 years for the research to achieve results it was largely Henry's public and judicious watchdog efforts that brought so many cosmetics corporations to where they now truthfully state their products are not tested on animals.

5 From decades spent working on the side of the weak and oppressed Henry became efficient at masterminding campaigns. His victory over Revlon didn't require wealth legislators or the help of big governments. He learned how to build public awareness campaigns how to shape malpractice lawsuits to successfully sue large companies and how to build committed groups of supporters for the cause.

6 We often assume that society has become too big and too bureaucratic for individuals to make a difference. How could one individual however humane and passionate possibly bring about change in the face of powerful global corporations ministerial indifference and complicated parliamentary rules?

7 Henry's life was dedicated to the cause of preventing suffering of innocent helpless animals especially those used in research. He didn't stand on the sidelines or try to get revenge for the suffering he observed. Henry was practical. He acted. He appealed to the public and created publicity kits to help common people become activists.

8 On April 21 1996 I sent Henry a fax telling him I was thinking about writing a book to chronicle his life and work. I asked whether I could stay with him for a few days in June to talk about it.

9 Henry called that evening. He said he'd really like me to write the book but he wasn't sure he was still going to be around in late June. He explained that he'd been diagnosed with cancer and asked whether I could come earlier.

10 I was in New York six days later. Henry had lost a lot of weight and lacked the energy I was used to seeing in him. His life expectancy was a matter of months. Death seemed to be stalking him.

11 The most remarkable thing about Henry though was the total absence of any sign of depression. Life had been good he said refusing to hear my sympathy and condolences. He said he'd done what he wanted to do and enjoyed it a lot. Why should he be depressed?

12 Henry's life did not terminate in the time his doctors predicted. For the next two years he kept working helping develop the material I needed for the book through interviews and questionnaires. When I began writing I never thought Henry would see a completed draft but he lived to see the book on sale in a New York bookstore. Then within a week wearing his favorite striped pajamas he died.

13 One essential mark of living well is to be satisfied with one's accomplishments when taking a retrospective look at life and to be able to accept death and face infinity calmly. Henry's life seemed to lack many of the things that most of us take for granted as essential to a good life. He never married or had a long-term live-in relationship. He had no children or successors. He never went to concerts to the theater or to fine restaurants. He didn't bring antibiotics to the needy or vaccinate the poor. He was never called a hero like the caped crusaders of our comic books. There is no fancy stone for him at the cemetery after his death. He just cared for the weakest creatures in his society. What gave Henry Spira's life depth and purpose? What did he and others find meaningful in the way he lived his life?

﻿

A turning point of my life

1 I wasn't yet 30 years old and was working as a firefighter in New York City in a firehouse completely swamped with calls. In the rare moments when we weren't busy I would make calls on our cordless phone handset or rush to our office to read Captain Gray's subscription of the Sunday New York Times. Late one afternoon when I finally read the Book Review section my blood began to boil. An article stated a thesis I took to be an offensive insult: William Butler Yeats the Nobel Prize-winning light of the Irish Literary Renaissance had risen above his Irishness and was now a universal poet. I grew indignant suddenly and a deep-seated passion within me was activated.

2 There were few things I was more proud of than my Irish heritage. My ancestors were Catholic Irish farmers fishermen and blue-collar workers all of whom were patrons of literature. From the time my family came ashore on Ellis Island and faced the threat of being deported we have fought discrimination against Irish immigrants. Ever since I first picked up a book of his poems Yeats had been my favorite writer. He wrote his poetry in close adherence to his Irish sensibilities. His life was in essence a tribute to his homeland. So it was offensive to think Irishness no matter if it was psychological social or literary was something to rise above. I felt like my heritage was a defendant at a tribunal and I had no choice but to protect it and denounce such an outdated prejudice.

3 Vibrating with agitation I grabbed a piece of clean paper one that had the logo of the Fire Department of the City of New York across the top. I began a letter trumpeting my indignation to the editor of the Sunday Book Review describing Yeats as he was: a writer fundamentally Irish in all he did and wrote.

4 I don't know why I felt I had to defend the world's greatest poet (at least next to Homer and Shakespeare) from being "prosecuted" or to compose a defense of Irish writing. I just knew that I had to write that letter in the same way a priest has to pray or a musician has to play an instrument.

5 Until that point in my life I hadn't written much of value a few poems and short stories. But like a beginning artist who longs to see his work come to life becoming an animated Disney film I understood that the more one draws or writes the better the end result will become. Realistically I approached writing like waxing a car thoroughly and repeatedly. So I wrote often to improve my writing skills. I tentatively sent material to various magazines and reviews but no one had ever been willing to publish me.

6 So it was an unexpected delight when the Times published my commentary. I suppose the editor decided to publish it because he was first attracted by the official nature of my stationery and then by the strangeness of an inner city firefighter's using refined language. I'd like to think though that the editor silently agreed with me.

7 I received about 20 sympathetic and congratulatory letters from professors that I tacked up by the superintendent's desk. These letters tickled me making my heart flutter with the thought that I was not only a published writer but an opinion maker. I was suddenly dubbed as someone whose views mattered.

8 Incidentally I also received letters from True magazine and from The New Yorker asking for interviews. It was the latter that ignited my career the article titled "Fireman Smith" provided the impetus for a large publishing company to request a manuscript about my life.

9 I had always subscribed to the belief that the work of firefighters was a worthy subject for a book but it had received incomprehensive coverage so far. I was bewildered at first with little confidence in my ability to write a whole book. So I began little by little writing one module at a time. I soon had the basic skeleton and framework for my book. The book went on to sell two million copies and was translated into 12 languages. In the following years I wrote three more best-sellers and last year published an autobiography.

10 Being a writer had been far from my expectations; being crowned a best-selling author was almost unimaginable. How had it happened? I often found myself thinking about it marveling at the inconsistency of my success and earlier failure. My thoughts always came back to the nucleus at the center of it all that letter to The New York Times.

11 The clearest explanation is that I had found a subject I felt so strongly about that the writing was a natural consequence of that passion. I felt the same kind of passion when I began writing about firefighters and later a serial story about my mother. Whatever the subjects they are always meaningful and timely because they represent the great values of human life decency honesty and fairness subjects that burn within me as I write.

12 Over the years all five of my children have come to me periodically with one dilemma or another. Should I go out for soccer or basketball? Should I take a job with this company or that one?

13 My answer is always the same: Think about your feelings deep down in your bones. Measure the heat of the fire there for that is the passion that will flow through every particle of your being. Always find that passion. And if you lose it retrieve it and start again. Your education and your experience will guide you toward making a right decision but your passion will always enable you to make a difference in whatever you do.

14 That's what I learned the day I stood up for Ireland's greatest poet.