

# REFLECTIONS



## Seeking Something Missing—Missing Something Left Behind

We caught each other's eyes simultaneously. I looked to admire—and her to see if I was peeking.

I once heard that a mother's job is to build their child's self-esteem. I guess that's why her mother let her wear that push-up bra—a size too small, with her cleavage—so supple and sweet—out for the world to see.

And see I did. I had to stop myself from daydreaming as the elevator doors closed and she walked away into my memory.

She reminded me of a different time—a time when daddy would say I smelt like an ashtray from all the cigarettes I smoked. It was the scent of bliss. It was a period of ignorance that I wish I could turn on and off like a switch.

Granny would think of me as a narcissist at that time. What a blessing it was to be so loved by thyself and the pretty girls that lived in my mind.

Mommy would picture me impunctual in those days. I couldn't make her see that the world creates the perfect timing just for me.

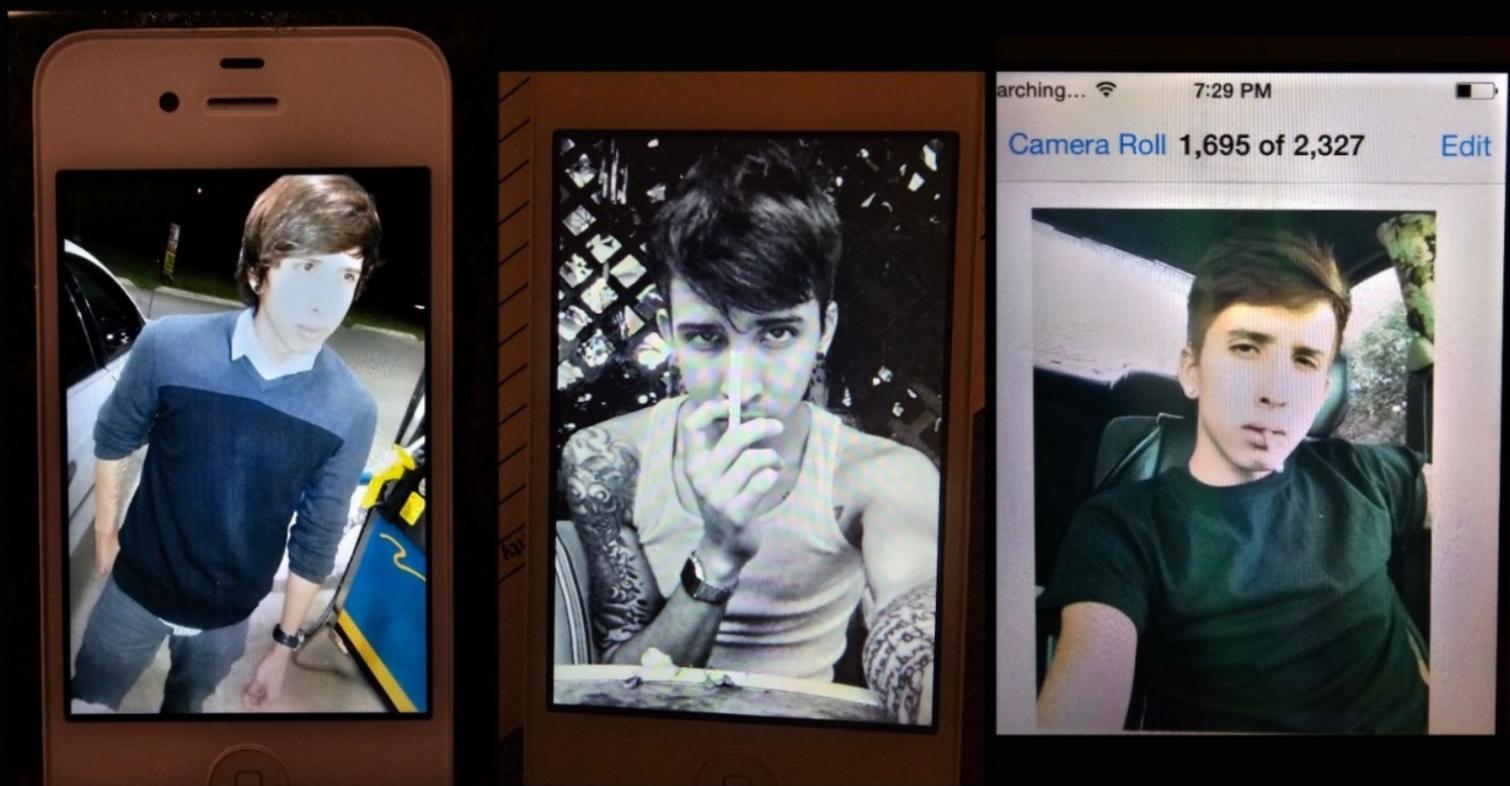
Who I once was inspires me.

Could I find him in the smoke of a cigarette—or in his scent, like a campfire and the wind and the trees?

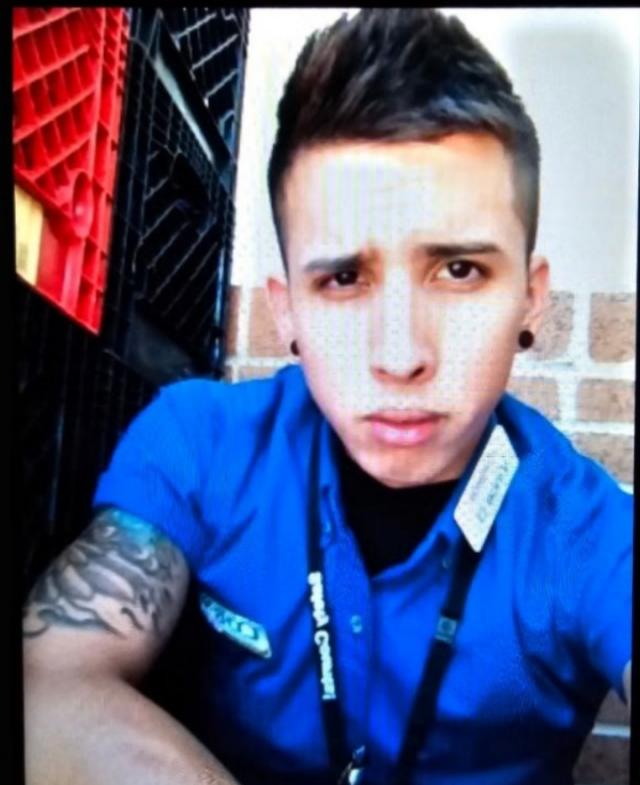
Of course he lingers within me—sometimes beating his drum, saying, "You fool! You coward! How could this be?"

Could I create him in my new body—in my new life—the one I worked so diligently to achieve while throwing away everything that was he?

◊ Influenced by a young woman I saw with her mother at the library and by reviewing old pictures of myself from 11 years ago.





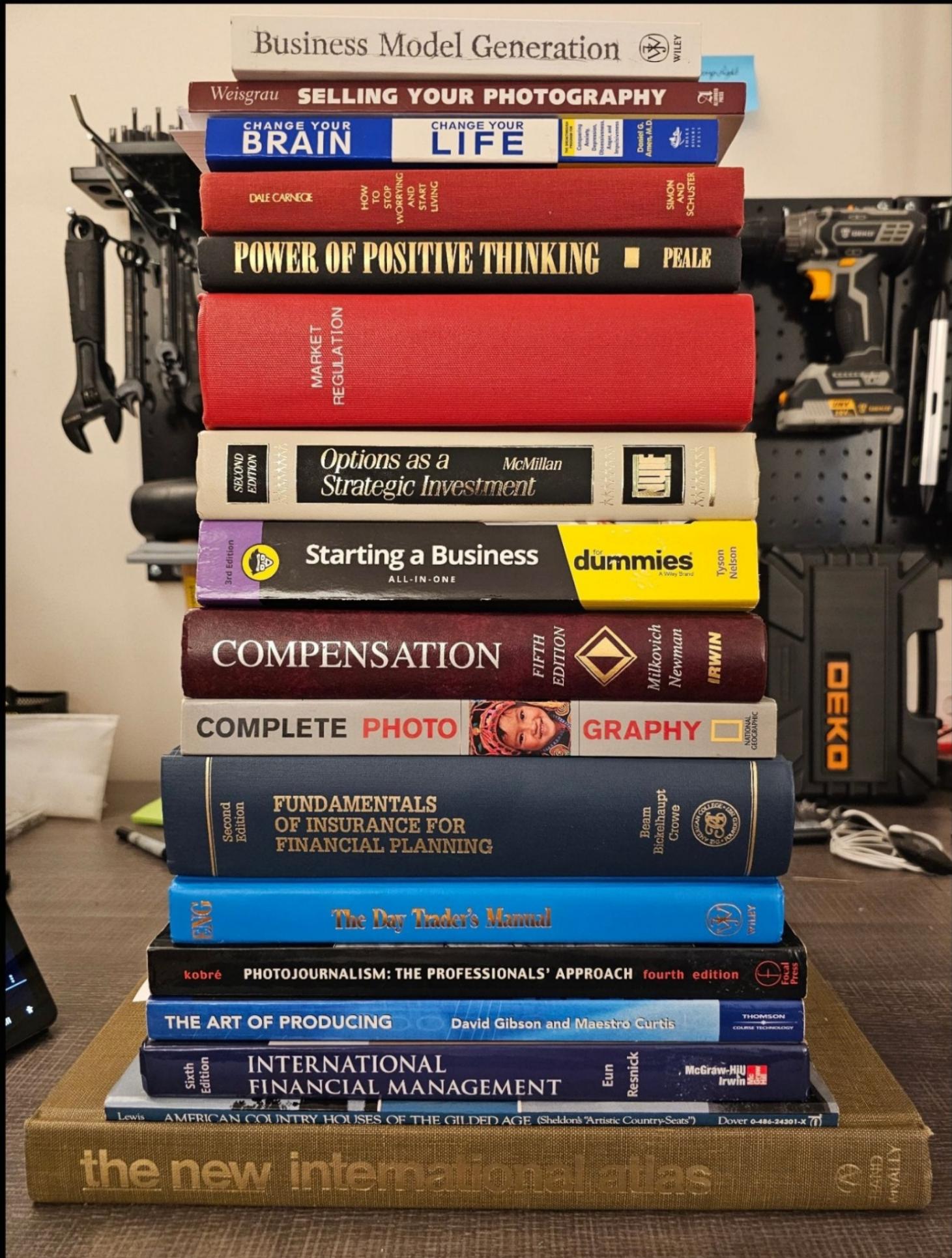


Definitely  
not  
marijuana!  
I was engaged  
in an  
ancient  
pre-karate-class  
ritual.



Okay, it was marijuana.

## New Books

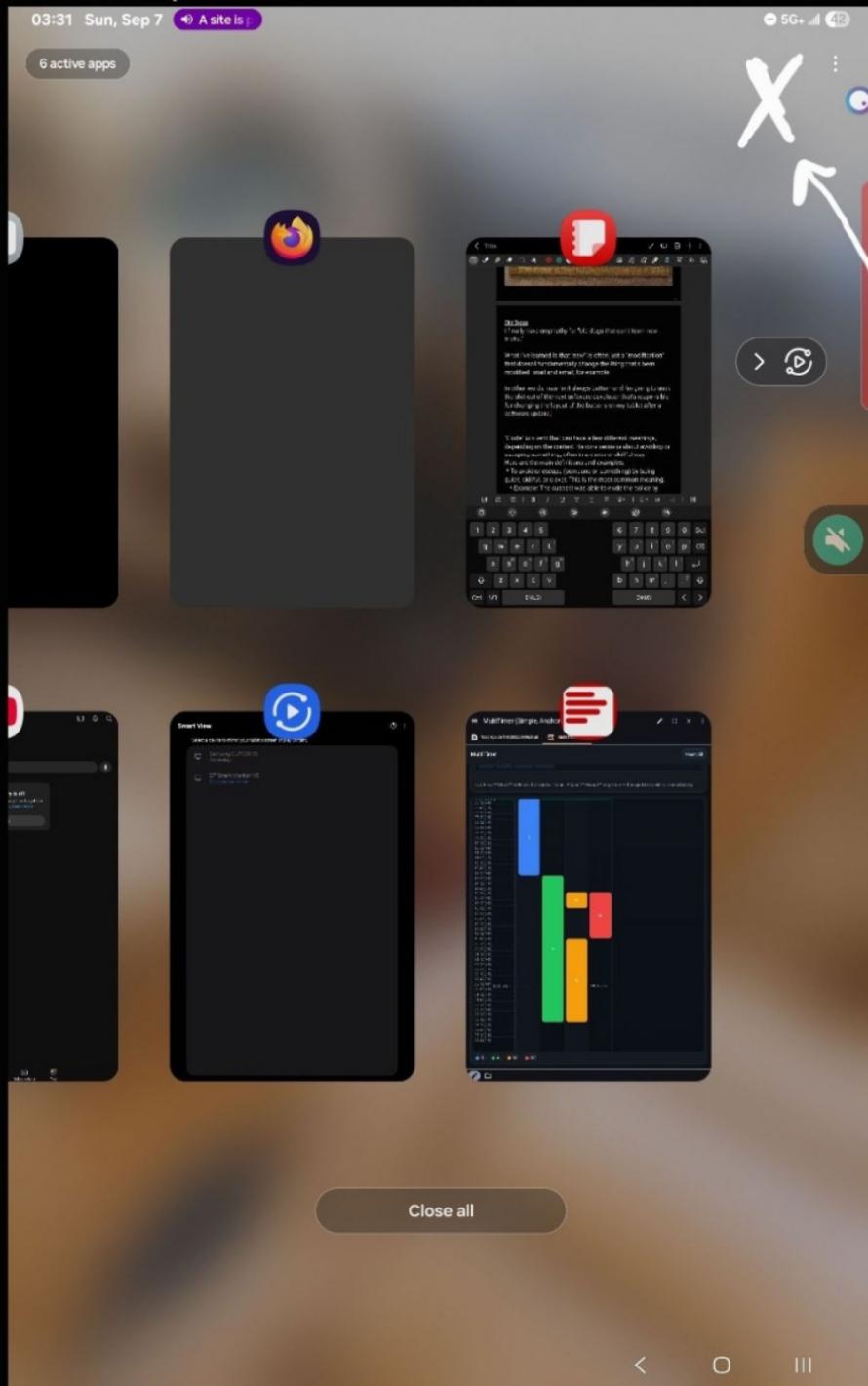


## Old Dogs

I finally have empathy for "old dogs that can't learn new tricks."

What I've learned is that "new" is often just a "modification" that doesn't fundamentally change the thing that's been modified (mail and email, for example).

In other words, new isn't always better—and I'm going to *tar and feather* the next software developer that's responsible for changing the layout of the buttons on my tablet after a software update.



They removed a button!  
I often used  
it to search  
for apps I  
wanted to open.

## Red Morphology

While soaking in my bathtub and watching a language arts video about the morphology and etymology of words, the most unexpected memory came to mind—so vivid, I could actually see it in front of me, as if I was transported to that moment in time. It was actually a hallucination, not a memory.

I was standing in front of a mechanic shop, adjacent to a restaurant I frequented, taking a photo of a 1990s red Mercedes hardtop convertible. I leaned my head and torso towards the driver's side window to peek inside its tan leather interior. I could see the wrinkles on the seats and the hot air rippling off the dashboard.

When I returned to reality—seconds later—I remembered taking the photo of that car when I was 16 or 17, but I didn't know the memory existed and had no idea what triggered the flashback. It makes me wonder what other seemingly insignificant moments have been captured so vividly in the recesses of my mind.

The only other time I experienced a hallucination was when I took a drug called Triple C's, the street name for the over-the-counter medication Coricidin HBP Cough & Cold, which has a hallucinogenic and dissociative effect when taken in high doses. But that hallucination, induced by Triple C's, felt much more psychedelic. I recall taking the pills, lying down, and then seeing on the ceiling the reflection of myself lying in bed. Then, as trite as it sounds, that reflection in the ceiling began to spin in circles away from me—like the imagery from the music video for Tame Impala's song called *It Feels Like We Only Go Backwards*. Suddenly, I found myself standing beside my bed, looking at myself lying in bed. Finally, I fell asleep.

When I awoke, I didn't feel I had a terrible experience, but I wouldn't say I enjoyed it, so I vowed never to take any more experimental drugs from Sarah. But it wouldn't be the last time, nor the worst drug.

What people don't understand about hard drugs is that at the beginning—before they begin to noticeably wreck the body—they produce a feeling of rapture unrivaled by anything else that most people have ever experienced. They could hook anyone.

She was a bad influence—Sarah. I sensed that she was very hurt by something in her life. That was the unspoken bond we shared. She was also very smart and recognized by our professors. She was vice president of the business society at our college. I often think she would have been the perfect wife for me. She looked like Tina Fey. Too bad she's married now.

Tina Fey



Here's the location of the mechanic shop as it looked when I was there.



Here's what the car looked like as it sat near the Texas flag from the image above. It was outstanding—as if it should have been on a long, windy road in Darien, Connecticut, driven by a thin, blonde-haired, middle-aged, real estate woman, in the 90s.



# Donating Versus Storing

The laborers who collected my donations looked puzzled as I unloaded my car one trip after another. I was going back to university and needed to downsize. Only my larger pieces of furniture, appliances, and decor were sold to my family members because they insisted—plus, I couldn't fit them in my car.

After moving back in with my grandparents, I noticed one day that Papa was getting ready to drive to the dump yard to get rid of some things. So I casually loaded his truck with my leftover kitchen supplies and decided to tag along. When he saw the stainless steel pots and pans mixed in with his scraps, he calmly unloaded them and walked right past me to put them back inside. Granny then reprimanded me for being such a bizarre child—she might have even reshared the story about her stepfather giving her the "*value-of-a-quarter*" speech.

When we got to the dump yard, a crowd of Spanish-speaking men huddled around the truck to see what we were dumping. I noticed that Papa hadn't unloaded all the kitchen supplies, and he started handing them out to the men who were bewildered but nonetheless almost jumping with joy. Papa smiled largely and laughed as he handed out spatulas and spoons—he was as jubilant as those men were grateful. I smiled too.

It feels good to give. That's why I've always preferred donating over selling. And I've been blessed in return—through thick and thin.

But I've learned the hard way that some things should be stored, not donated. I was recently glad and grateful to find in a box my smaller dress shirts that I hadn't worn in over a year. Since moving to Connecticut, I've regretted too many times ridding myself of things I could have used later. Now, I find myself storing more and focusing on other ways to give.

# The Arnold Bennett 7.5 Method and The David Allen Prioritization, Capability, and Availability Principle

Seven and a half hours per week is all that's required for someone to achieve something illustrious outside of their normal routine—30 minutes in the morning, six days a week, and 1.5 hours in the evening, three days a week.

That's the key practice that Arnold Bennett recommended when he wrote his book *How to Live on 24 Hours a Day*, 115 years ago. When I first read that, I thought it was absurd—incapable of producing any meaningful results.

But tracking my time over the past few weeks revealed that I wasn't even spending 30 minutes per week on some of my important projects.

Part of the problem is that I'm a philomath—a lover of learning many subjects. I've filled my plate with so many things I want to do—on top of all the things I must do. Sometimes it's difficult to choose where to channel my effort.

Another part of the problem is that I like to putter on projects—moving from one project to another, accomplishing one or a few tasks associated with each.

There's nothing inherently wrong with putting on projects. Jeff Bezos, the legendary and ultra-successful founder of Amazon, has often been quoted saying that he likes to start his workday by "puttering in the morning." But, as much as I like to putter, I see now that it's one of the reasons why I haven't managed to spend at least 7.5 hours per week progressing my most important projects.

In fact, if I make one project my sole focus for the day, I can accomplish

more in that day than I could during a week of putting on that project. That's always the case when deadlines make a particular project my main priority.

But most of my important projects don't have deadlines, and if I set my own, there are no imminent consequences for not meeting them. What's more is that all of my most important projects are considered a priority, so deciding what to do based on priority is not helpful.

What's often more important than prioritization is capability and availability.

#### CAPABILITY EXAMPLE:

While taking long baths, I'm incapable of updating my paper-based financial records, but I'm perfectly capable of reading and annotating ebooks or typing journal entries on my phone. I can also reread and reflect on previous journal entries (a necessary and often neglected productivity habit).

#### TIME AVAILABLE EXAMPLE:

Calling my cable company to contest a charge on my account can range from 30 minutes to an hour plus. The best time to make such calls is while taking long walks because I don't like spending time on calls in my home office, despite having the ability to multitask.

#### ENERGY AVAILABLE EXAMPLE:

Some days I wake with enough energy to write a newsletter and run a marathon. Other times, it seems like I struggle to stand up straight. When I feel languid, it's not a good time for me to spend a day learning about the complexities of audio engineering, so I shouldn't force myself to do so. But updating my financial records doesn't require much mental effort, so that may be the best time to work on that project.

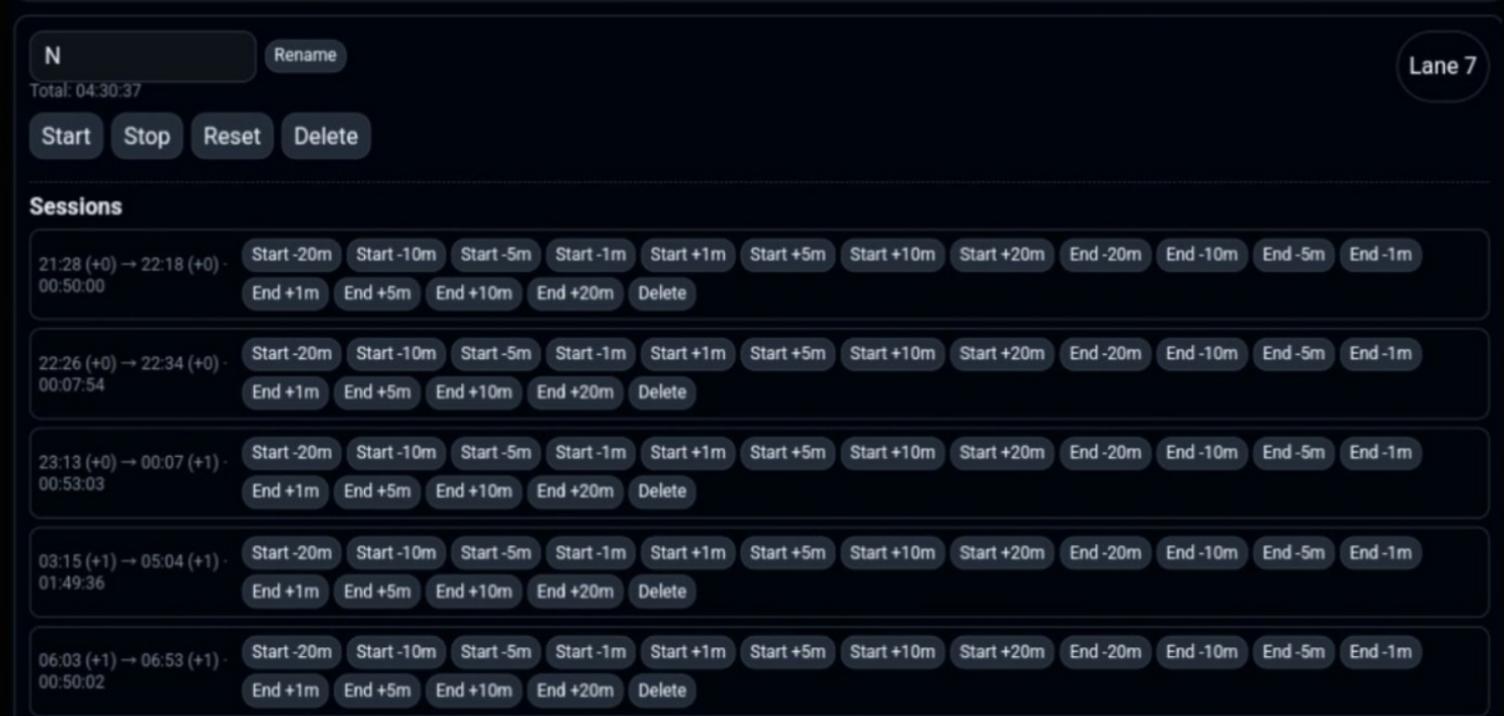
I credit the new time tracking app I created with ChatGPT for making time tracking effortless.

# TIME ALLOCATION - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2025:



As you can see, I'm still a night owl some of the time.

I've made some important updates to the app. Now, I can adjust the length of timers in cases where I start them late. That also gives me the ability to manually add timers when I forget to track my time. Those manual adjustments are reflected on the timetable too.



With Love,  
Vincent A. V-S.

40TUE20250930

