

Preface

He won the Messiest Desk in Greater Cincinnati Award. Just trying to find something would send an avalanche of paper and file folders onto the stacks of books and boxes on the floor. The award for winning the contest was a new \$1,500 desk and clean-up help from a time-management consultant. The consultant declared he could clean-up the mess in five hours, but Bill Daily, who chairs Xavier University's Communication Arts Department, scoffed that he had been working on the pile for 12 hours and hadn't made a dent. He'd like an orderly office but says he's a saver and that he has a garage just like his office.

Cleaning will always come very low on his list of priorities--time with students comes first. Frankly, it is doubtful that a consultant or *Time Capsules* will make any difference to Professor Daily. But he probably will make room for his new desk, not in his office that would mean endless hours of sorting which he will never put in the hands of someone else but somewhere in his house, because he is, as he says, "a saver."

An airlines engineer is known for working hours that makes slavery look easy. He keeps two secretaries busy, one during the day, another for evenings which he works virtually all of the time. He will never be charged with sexual harassment, he can spare no time for hanky panky. He is notorious for being late to meetings, including the ones he calls himself. His wife has raised their three children who are no longer kids. *Time Capsules* cannot put in balance such an unbalanced life. This book is not for you, Mr. X.

Financial planner and tax consultant John Blankinship has seen many disorganized people. They arrive with papers in shoe boxes, shopping bags, and one client came with a laundry basket full. She said, "Here's my life. Fix it." If this woman and his other clients followed the advice in *Time Capsules*, they would run up fewer hours on Blankinship's meter. Tax advisors charge less when they don't have to sort through a mess.

She was on the fast track. Her husband joked that she was so caught up with climbing the corporate ladder that their only daughter needed to wear a name tag. Then at the moment of her promotion to vice president, there came her divorce.

Responsible for \$800,000 of annual sales in the health care business, she would not allow a divorce to cast her as a failure. She liked to say, "Success comes to the smart and the swift. Business can not afford to be fat. One must be lean." Therefore, she thought she understood the need to downsize, until the position eliminated was her own. She now had the time she did not have before to spend with her daughter and to contemplate the meaning of her life. *Time Capsules* might be of interest to this woman.

One production manager at an auto assembly plant told me that she rushes about most of every day adjusting for the many variables that vary. She complains that she was pulled off her job to take a course in time management. The course, she found, was a waste of time because it dealt with goal setting and tips for prioritizing and did nothing to address the unexpected problems in her workplace. *Time Capsules* might have been more helpful.

A tree care company, this one located not far from where I live, paid big bucks for a ten week video course on, you guessed it, time management. Trainers who schedule such courses rarely multiply the wages of employees required to take them times the

number of course hours times the cost of the materials and/or trainer. The answer to that simple multiplication problem would spell much more time and money lost, I fear, than saved.

Taking precious work time for time management courses is a mistake. This is not meant to attack well intentioned time management consultants. I have instructed such seminars myself and may have helped some of those enrolled. I do not charge that their motivations are solely profit-making for themselves.

Rather, I fault more well-intentioned managers who order overworked people to steal time from the task at hand to be preached sermons on personal goal planning and prioritizing while worrying about their work piling up. Managers are not dead wrong to schedule courses on personal time management and career development. Such are needed and appreciated by most employees--if temporary help can be hired to tend the store while they are gone. The mistake made is to link time management seminars with work flow and the bottom line, and even to cutting the number of employees needed to do a job.

More probably what is needed in most workplaces to manage time more effectively are coordination meetings, cycle reduction time planning, team building and genuine employee partnering. These are the kinds of time management efforts that improve quality and pay off. These are site-specific solutions that improve systems and consequently make working life less stressful and more meaningful and satisfying.

Major companies over the past two decades have provided stress management seminars for their managers, and occasionally even masseurs. Such efforts are designed to enable those who know the pressure of high performance not to be stressed out and burned up. More recently, the concern is to encourage managers to look within. So it is that introspection seminars focus upon the need for time to think, time to reflect upon the meaning of life, time to develop perspective and balance, and time to muster the courage to be virtuous.

Time Capsules is so purposed. But it is not a book for only managers who are afforded the time to take a course on introspection. More especially, *Time Capsules* is not a text calculated to make us more efficient at the expense of being less reflective. Life is too short to be so consumed with hustle and bustle that we do not enjoy its pleasures until retirement.

If you really want more time and more quality time, that is possible. Test out the ideas within. Do let me know how they work out.

So let me say up front, to save time, do not read *Time Capsules* from cover to cover even though it is a quick read. Rather, like taking mineral-vitamin supplements, take a small capsule from time to time. *Time Capsules* is meant to provide perspective in time outs--a few minutes here and a few moments there. I try not to take myself too seriously and expect you to do the same.

--Bill Gorden

TIME IS LIFE

The dinosaurs reigned supreme for 140 million years, then died out about 65 million years ago, leaving no direct descendants. Humankind's history of civilized existence spans but a few thousand years, and the length of each individual life is rarely 100 years. These few years that are ours are physically and emotionally linked to the beat of our hearts. Time is life. The Time-Life building, which houses these two best-selling magazines, is well-named.

Using time effectively is living life effectively, and conversely, using time poorly is allowing life to slip away. The primary rule, then, for effective management of time is to treasure each moment that is ours.

USING TIME EFFECTIVELY IS LIVING LIFE EFFECTIVELY

Too often it is not until the gift of life is threatened that we awake to it. It may be only after cancer is unexpectedly discovered and surgery arrests it that one comes to experience the sweet smell of ripe grapes, or the good feel of clean sheets, or simply doing a day's work.

When I consider the known span of time, the time of my life indeed is short. When I pause to think such thoughts, I am overwhelmed with mystery of any time I can call my own. It is all so awesome that I want to treasure each moment and cling to it as though it were gold.

Time is life. And I have only one life to live. That is the hard reality each of us must accept. Learning how to manage time wisely perhaps is our most important management task. Time also is money, as Ben Franklin wisely put it. So using time wisely is the goal of every manager--from the very top to the first line supervisor.

JIGSAW PUZZLE

There is little wonder so many
persons today are clock-watchers.
It's kind of like buying a jigsaw
puzzle already put together; a job
that offers no demands is not only
boring-- it's pointless! The poorer
man is not the man with the fewer
possessions but the man with the
fewer challenges.

--Lee Miller

THE PRESENCE OF NOW

We continuously experience the immediate present passing by. Our direct contact with the world is so fleeting, moment by moment fading to be replaced by the new now.

In a real sense, all we ever experience is the now. Yet many of us miss the present because burdens of the past blot it out. Yesterday's glories or emotional injuries swamp the present so that we do not experience the sensuous now.

On the other hand, we also may miss the richness of the *now* by living in anticipation of a sumptuous tomorrow--that promotion, that new love, the Olympic-size swimming pool attached to our Tudor mansion.

**DON'T MISS THE RICHNESS OF THE NOW BY LIVING IN
ANTICIPATION OF A SUMPTUOUS TOMORROW.**

To be sure, time has a psychological dimension. We can never be free of the past. And it is true that how we see the future has an impact on how we utilize the present.

An awareness of now is captured in songs and poems. Such an awareness transcends the sequential logic of time of our rational mind.

The poet sings:

Look to this day
 For this is life.
In its brief course lie all verities
 and all the realities of existence:
 The bliss of growth,
 The glory of action,
 The splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream
 and tomorrow is only a vision,
But today, well lived
 makes every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every tomorrow a vision of hope.
 Look well, therefore, to this day.

-- Exhortation to the Dawn

"Several hundred billion spinning stars revolve around the center of the Milky Way galaxy. Midway out its arms, stars—including our sun—move at about 500,000 miles per hour, taking 250 million years to make a single circuit."

--Guide To The Milky Way, *National Geographic* (1994, January). p.21.

IN STEP WITH THE STARS ☆

Our age is faster. Technology has multiplied how far and fast we can move, how many we can communicate with, and how many we can feed and kill. The statisticians call it the J-Curve phenomena. It took nearly a million years for humans to populate this planet with one billion people, until 1800. But one billion has doubled to two, and two billion has more than doubled. If this rate of growth is not slowed, by 2000 our population will top six billion. And by 3530 the total mass of human flesh will equal the mass of the Earth.

Travel speed has accelerated exponentially also. Until the 1800s, foot travel, horse drawn travel, and sail power dominated. Since that time, steam locomotion has led to jet engines, transoceanic flights, intercontinental rockets, even sending humans to the moon, and space shuttles.

**IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE LEARN TO
DRIVE AT LIFE'S EXPRESSWAY SPEED.**

Explosive power likewise has increased. Within the last one hundred years, TNT equivalents have changed so rapidly that we now live in terror of total destruction by atomic and hydrogen bombs.

In short, time has accelerated because of the knowledge explosion. And because life has accelerated, it is necessary that we learn how to drive at life's expressway speed.

It is also necessary to learn to slow down. A Negro spiritual inspired Wilfred A. Peterson to write an essay prayer entitled "Slow Me Down, Lord" in 1952. It was especially written for the modern business executive. Here it is:

"Slow me down, Lord! Ease the pounding of my heart by the quieting of my mind. Steady my hurried pace with a vision of the eternal reach of time. Give me, amidst the confusion of my day, the calmness of the everlasting hills. Break the tensions of my nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the singing streams that live in my memory. Help me to know the magic restoring power of sleep. Teach me the art of taking Minute Vacations. . .of slowing down to look at a flower, to chat with a friend, to pat a dog, to read a few lines from a good book. Remind me each day of the fable of the hare and the tortoise that I may know that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed. Let me look upward into the branches of the towering oak and know that it grew great and strong because it grew slowly and well. Slow me down, Lord, and inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values that I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny. Amen."

This age requires that we learn to slow down. Living on fast-time is easier when

we learn to take the long perspective. Looking into a starry night puts our day in perspective. That's when we learn patience! That's when we try to align our lives with God or goodness. So take the long look. Get in step with the stars, and you will spend your time on what matters, and you will find that what matters will be time.

Making wherever we are liveable for ourselves and those who come after us is what matters. We cannot afford to be selfish. We are all in this together. The air that surrounds us and the rains that refresh us, like the seas, are international. It is science fiction to suggest that if we mess up this planet we can take flight to some distant star.

Already some places are so over-populated that more than one third of the people on earth live in poverty. Hungry people cannot think of the future. They rob the land of trees for fuel. Weakened from malnutrition, they suffer from plagues. Hungry people stream across borders of richer neighbors. To make matters worse, they fight over territory.

Therefore, aid to underdeveloped regions to stabilize their population and to be wise stewards of their resources is what matters. Investing our time in peacemaking is what matters.

Work that does good is what matters. Nothing matters more than practices that conserve the soil. Few things matter more than sanitation and sewer systems and policing that prevents pollution of our water and air. Preventing epidemics and making health care available to everyone are what matters. Building parks for children and recreation is what matters. Making streets safe is what matters. Providing schools is what matters. Warning our children against taking advantage of others is what matters. Teaching them the virtues of caring for the well-being of their communities is what matters. Looking up on the wonders of creation is so awesome that we want to do more than star gaze. We want to make our short time on this earth count. We cannot do wonders, but we can make a difference.

Again read the last lines of the Slow Me Down prayer: "inspire me to send my roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values that I may grow toward the stars of my greater destiny." They are more than romantic rhetoric.

A last suggestion that provides perspective is the realization that time is a gift, and life is very temporary. Once we realize that, just being given one more day is like Hanukkah or Christmas.

*If you don't have time, you're dead.
You got it now, you say.
Squeeze it for all its worth.
All too quickly, like quicksilver,
It will slip through your fingers, and
Try as you may, you will not be able
To scoop it up again.*

ONE PERSON

We shouldn't burden ourselves with feeling guilty because we aren't superman or superwoman, but neither should we give up because we are only one person. What can one person do? The answer individuals have given to that question brightens the pages of history, sometimes in spite of major handicaps.

One person can paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel--Michelangelo.

One deaf person can compose a symphony--Beethoven.

One person, who did not do well in school, can file over six hundred patents--Edison.

One cripple can be Sir Walter Scott.

One person locked in a prison cell, and you have a John Bunyan or a Ghandi.

Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and that one person is George Washington.

Raise him with asthma and thick glasses, and you have a Teddy Roosevelt.

Hide him playing second fiddle in an unknown South American orchestra, and you find a Toscanini.

One person can rise out of a grease pit to be Walter P. Chrysler.

Another can invent a vaccine that wipes out polio--Jonas Salk.

Deny a child the ability to see, hear, and speak, and you have a Helen Keller.

Now tell me: what can one person do with the time in his or her life?