



# the Observer

## The Moment Is Now

I sat on a rock, overlooking The Cantwell Glacier in the Alaskan Range. I was 24 years old and just beginning my military career. My boss and I had hiked for two days across two glaciers to this Bureau of Land Management cabin. The small A-frame had been air-lifted here a decade earlier. There was a journal inside, chronicling fascinating stories by cross-country skiers and hikers from the past ten years. Our goal was to climb the mountain behind the cabin and then hike out 20 miles to the nearest road. We were forced to stay put due to threatening weather. I was disappointed by the forced delay and decided to read a paperback left behind from a previous traveler. As I sat on the rock reading, a movement across the glacier caught my eye. A very large serac (block

of ice) fell on an icefall a few miles away. Suddenly, there was an explosive sound, like a loud clap of thunder. I was awestruck. This tiny serac had produced a deafening noise, but appeared as only a tiny blemish on the massive icefall that fed into the 15 mile long, 2,500 foot thick glacier. It was a cosmic moment. I felt very small and insignificant in terms of the universe. Rarely since have I been able to recapture this feeling—the overwhelming sense of nature’s beauty and incredible power. Many of us have had similar experiences, whether staring into the angelic face of a newborn child or enjoying the peace and serenity of a magnificent sunset. These are emotional moments when time seems to stand still. They can even be life changing.

What is important to you? It most certainly is as different to each one of us as the six billion others on this planet. The point being—this is a personal question. There is no manual; no set of absolute rules that will help you or me determine what we should do day-to-day. However, there are a few guidelines that can help us pick a path that

may eventually bring great happiness and fulfillment.

First and foremost—we need to set our brain in motion. Our brain is engaged and powered by electrical currents; there must be a negative and a positive pole or nothing happens. We can’t initiate any actions if we can’t “see” in our mind’s eye a representation of a good or a bad outcome. There is nothing for our brain to grasp if we are unable to paint a picture of the future we want. Of course, the future never turns out quite like we planned, but it is very important to create tension—positive, exciting tension. Without a clear picture of the future, we procrastinate. As my mother used to say, an idle mind is the devil’s workshop (we were never idle if my mother had anything to say about it). Procrastination is a deadly enemy, keeping us from what we can be or do in this world.

*If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.*

- LAWRENCE J. PETER

Do you remember the first day of high school? It was scary. No more carefree, innocent grade school days. I clearly remember



that first day, and who I met for the first time. As I carefully made my way down the hall amongst some very imposing upperclassman, another fellow newbie barreled toward me with great confidence, followed by a few friends. I soon met Terry personally and heard his "future story" several times over the next four years. Terry's

set up the necessary positive tension in his mind to achieve a successful political future.

Our brain helps us attend to what is important by focusing our attention on the future. But that is not enough. What about the incremental steps we need to take to get where we want to go. How do we distinguish day-

along the 150 mile route. The temperature can reach 115 degrees Fahrenheit and the competitors complete the equivalent of six marathons in six days. One of the legs is a 50 mile course and typically takes all day and most of the night to complete. Ed and his fellow competitors will tell you that it is both a physical and spiritual journey. In fact, the spiritual part is really why competitors return each year. The preparation is grueling. Competitors start training a year in advance, running for hours and hours, testing the limits of their endurance. Are they focused? Yes. Have they painted a picture of a good and poor result? Yes. Do they know what is important each and every day? Absolutely yes. Running six marathons in the desert may not be your idea of fun, but it certainly captured Ed's attention. For six days he was undeniably intent on what he needed to do and not do in order to reach his goal—the finish line.

Each day is a marathon of sorts. There's always a finish line to cross. Here are some tips to help you focus and concentrate. First, only try to accomplish three things each day, five if you are very motivated. We're just not effective if we try to focus on more than three action items. For those of you who are list writers, when was the last time you completed an entire list? Probably never. You probably do what most people do and that is transfer the items from your current list to a new list. When I mean three items I don't mean do the dishes,

*The vision must be followed by the venture.  
It is not enough to stare up the stairs  
— we must step up the stairs.*

- VANCE HAVNES

story was always the same. He was going to be a politician and an influential one as well. Terry was our Student Council President, and after high school he eventually graduated with a law degree from Georgetown University. He worked his way up through the Washington political scene and eventually met a state governor who decided to run for president of the United States. Terry McAuliffe raised funds for Bill Clinton's first and second presidential campaigns. Terry was also head of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) from 2001 to 2005 and is currently chairman of the Hillary Clinton for President Committee. At 14 years of age, Terry knew exactly what he wanted. He knew what was important to him. He clearly communicated his future goal and ultimately was successful. I'm certain he did not plan from the beginning to head the DNC, but he certainly

to-day what is important—that is what we should and should not spend time doing? One of the biggest traps is busy work, those relatively simple chores and easy tasks that keep us from the tougher stuff. Hence the saying, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned." We can easily be sidetracked by mundane tasks, ignoring the more important. Staying focused and on task is not easy. Technological distractions like cell phones and email don't help matters either. It's a wonder we ever get anything done.

My good friend and partner, Ed Kelly, just completed his second *Marathon Des Sables*, a.k.a. the "toughest footrace on the planet". This six day ultra marathon is held in Morocco's Sahara Desert each April. The competitors are required to carry a backpack with a week's worth of food. The event organizers provide water and tents

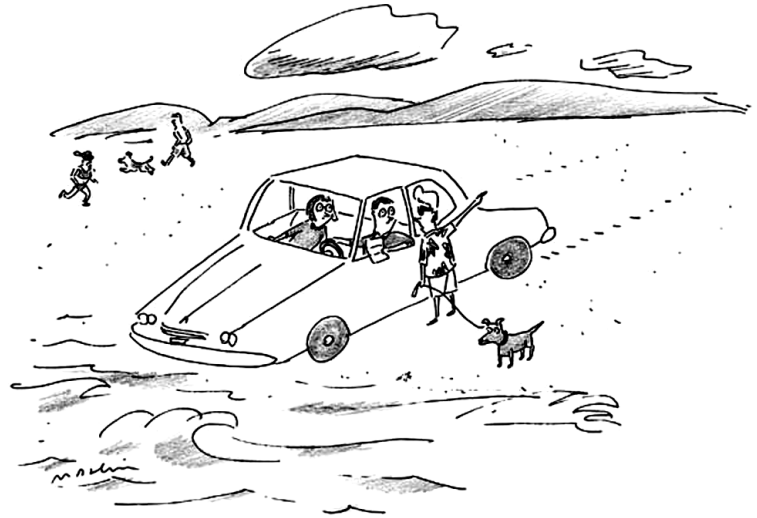
take out the trash and go to the grocery store. These are all necessary and important tasks but fall into the busy work category. Nothing exciting or stimulating here. The big question—how to focus on what is important? Over the past 10 years there is one question I ask everyone I meet, "Three years from now, what needs to happen for you to be happy both personally and professionally?" My follow up questions relate to dangers that must be overcome, strengths that can get the job done and opportunities that are possible. Dan Sullivan, of The Strategic Coach, shared these powerful, soul searching questions with me.

This question stumps most people because it requires them to envision a picture of the future. Most of us try to envision the future by assessing where we are and then projecting forward. There is a trick to this question, however, and that is, it is much easier for us to imagine a positive picture of the future than it is to figure out how to get there. What does that mean, you ask? It's like this. Picture the horizon.

## *It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves.*

- EDMOND HILLARY

This is a mental construct. We can't really arrive there; it is always just out of reach. Now, let's say you are in New York and want to travel west to reach the horizon. You might stop in New Jersey...maybe



*"O.K., this is the West Coast, O.K.? What you want is the East Coast, so turn around and go back twenty-four, twenty-five hundred miles, and that's the East Coast. You can't miss it."*

make it to Pittsburgh...maybe even further to Cleveland, and if you are really fortunate...end up in Chicago. No matter how hard you try, though, the horizon is always just out of reach. Like a dog chasing its tail, you will never get there.

Time for plan B. You decide to follow the horizon until you reach San Francisco. Before you depart, you envision your new home on the bay, overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. You visualize the vacation trips to beautiful Napa Valley with your family. No more snow to shovel—only a little annoying fog, and no more bone chilling cold—only cool ocean breezes. Get the picture? Now, when you leave New York, there

is no stopping in New Jersey, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, or even Chicago because your vision of the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco keeps you moving. Lewis and Clark most assuredly began with some kind of

motivating vision of their destination as well.

Yet, even these idyllic West coast fantasies may not be enough to hold your interest over the course of three years. You need intermediate goals along the way—which leads to my next step. Build a picture of the future in your mind and then break it down. All successful people have a vision of where they're going and some practical way to measure their progress along the way. Example: "How do you prepare for the *Marathon Des Sables*?" By systematically assembling a year, then a quarter, then a week and finally a daily schedule. As you journey across America, there will be set backs. You may be forced to stop along the way, due to unforeseen events. That is okay, as long as you continue to make progress. Life is about continual progress, not perfection. I don't recall the complete Lewis and Clark story, but I am certain the Rocky Mountain Range slowed them down.

Sir Edmond Hillary, a poor sheep herder from New Zealand, and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay, reached the top of Mt. Everest on May 29th, 1953. Hillary became interested in climbing at the age of 16 while on a school field trip. He was a gawky teenager and not very athletic, but upon returning from his Air Force World War II service, he decided to be the first person to climb Mount

Everest. You may be surprised to know that his first two attempts to scale this mountain ended in failure. Yet with little money and a grand vision he was ultimately successful.

Take inspiration from Sir Hillary's example. Pick a horizon and then go for it. Visualize a worthy goal and determine what will help you succeed. Mountain climbing or ultra

marathonning may not be your thing, but there are so many more ways to achieve happiness and fulfillment. It may be enjoying the peacefulness of nature, spending quality time with family and friends or successfully achieving audacious goals. Whatever you're doing, savor the moment. It can be life changing.



Edward J. Kelly, Jr



Gary W. Klaben



Kevin T. Coyle

*Securities Offered Through  
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