

THE DAILY RECORD

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The time that might have been

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Now that I have an opportunity to write this column, I might as well make the most of it.

I am hereby putting everyone I know on notice, along with anybody who just happens to be reading this column, that I officially will be unable to complete my to-do list before I die. If you are waiting for something in particular, consider yourself duly warned. In fact, I haven't even had enough time to redo my to-do list or to write out new goals in so long that I doubt the old technology I wrote them with is still functioning.

Now I'm stuck wondering what it is I wanted to do. All of this leads me to the inescapable conclusion that there must be reincarnation. Otherwise, there's no rational alternative to what should have been obvious to me long ago: I'm trying to cram it all into one lifetime. I see no alternative to reincarnation, I'm just going to have to come back or I'll never get all of this stuff done.

If that weren't bad enough, spring is finally here, which brings with it a natural instinct to want to step away from the desk and walk outside, even if it's to do nothing but sit down and enjoy the fact that the temperature is rising slowly above absolute zero. For those who haven't taken physics in a while, absolute zero is the temperature at which all activity in your brain stops, and you just want to sit down and stare out the window.

Actually this is all alright by me, because I've really had enough of the cold weather. This year it got to me. Of course one alternative, which I will not subscribe to under any circumstances, is the possibility that I'm getting older and less tolerant of cold weather. This is simply unacceptable, and I will have none of it.

When I wrote my first column two weeks ago, I mentioned that I asked my daughter for advice about what to chose as my first topic, and how strange it was being at an age when I can ask my kids for advice. Luckily, I'm still at an age when I can ask my mom for advice as well. This morning I called my mother to see if she would be willing to go for a walk because I don't spend enough time with her. I don't tell her how much I love her often enough. I just was finding it impossible to catch up after being out sick for a week and having another deadline to contend with — this column.

As always, she came to the rescue, but inadvertently. She didn't realize the impact she had when she merely asked me whether I had seen the beautiful sunrise this morning. No, unfortunately I was running around the house instead, trying to come up with ideas for this column. I was taking comfort in the fact that I would try to do this column for the first time with voice recognition technology, and perhaps that would take away some of the stress. That is what technology is for, right? It helps us to accomplish more in the day, to have more free time for our lives, right?

I don't know about you, but it seems to me technology is doing

anything but freeing up time in my life. In the 1960s, my dad was a sole practitioner and my mom was his entire legal staff. Some mornings they woke up together at 5 a.m. and went out on our front porch, holding hands and drinking coffee, to watch the sunrise. My dad would dictate a letter while my mom took it in shorthand. Then she would read the entire letter back, and he would re-dictate paragraphs or sentences he didn't like, then the entire new draft was read back to him, once again, until it was right. I still have some of those old letters, and I've been meaning to find the time to use some of their more brilliant paragraphs in the future in my own practice.

I don't know anybody in any profession who can afford to take the time required to draft such wonderful letters today. That one hasn't made it onto my to-do list yet, either — finding a way to use technology to bring back some of the calmer, meaningful and thoughtful effort that should go into each and every letter. I also have to add "seeing more sunrises" instead of just thinking about them afterwards.

I guess I could make a whole different to-do list about the different things I want to add to my to-do list.

Perhaps I'm just not using technology correctly. I've found times when I am writing e-mails at midnight from my home office and, luckily my phone can now let me know when it receives a spam e-mail at 4:30 in the morning. That's a benefit I didn't count on! Somehow that wasn't in my ideal workday scenario as I started out years ago. In fact, back then I was convinced I would get two offices next to each other — one with an electronic keyboard, the other in which to practice law. Since I made so little money in my full-time day job at the hospital while I played music "for my living" before law school, I realized how easy it would be. I'd spend half the week practicing law, make more money than I was making at my minimum wage job in Boston, then spend the other half of the week calmly walking into the other office to write music. Never happened! I forgot to put it on my to-do list.

The truth is, I'd be lost without all of these demands on me. When I studied psychology, I was taught that we go through an identity crisis as we mature from mid-teenagers into adults, striving to find out what life is all about and how we fit in the overall scheme of things. We have to decide what we think we can do for living, where we want to live, what type of lifestyles we choose and what moral structure we wish to adopt. It's truly quite confusing, hence the term "identity crisis."

Unfortunately, I have now learned this crisis hits again later in life. It happens as we grow older, our responsibilities change. If we're lucky, our careers grow. We usually get caught up in the pursuit of earning more money, getting more possessions and then, before you know it, friends retire and move away. Some pass away.

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Continued ...

The relationship with our children evolves and changes drastically. Relationships with our parents evolve and change drastically. Some people start asking whether you plan to retire, then it hits you — so much of our identity is wrapped up in our day-to-day existence in our jobs that we really may have just been procrastinating for decades, never truly resolving the identity crisis we thought was resolved in our early 20s.

Either way, I need to clear something up that was included in my first column two weeks ago, when I wrote that I was 28 years old but would soon be celebrating my 30th year out of law school. I'm sorry if that was obtuse, I was merely trying to be humorous. Truth is, I still think I'm 28. As appealing as that age is, however, there is something about being a little bit older that has its own comforts

and benefits. I haven't a clue what they are, but I'm sure I'll figure it out sometime in the next 30 years.

I better put that on my to-do list, too. At one time I decided I just would not get older, I would simply refuse. Then I realized the only alternative is really not that good, either. Maybe I just need more lists, or technology ... or reincarnation.

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