

I Just Have **1** Question

Is This the Right Spot?



by Doug Carpenter

If you're looking for the quintessential "poster child" for "deep" thoughts, how's this? "Life isn't about the *destination*. It's about the *journey*." It's certainly contemplative enough. And even a little inspiring, in a new age greeting card sort of way. But tell me.

When was the last time *you* headed out with absolutely *no idea* of where you needed to *end up*? [Talk about a guaranteed recipe for terrible *gas* mileage.]

Life, unfortunately, doesn't come with an existential TripTik. So occasionally we *do* find ourselves *figuratively* driving around hoping that we'll stumble across the fabled "X" that supposedly marks "the spot" — assuming we're able to

figure out what sort of "spot" we should be trying to *get* to.

All of which inevitably seems to lace this particular moment with the heady, seductive fragrance of *Fresh Starts* — a scent I'm convinced they douse every new calendar with right before they stuff it in the envelope and toss it in with the rest of the outgoing mail.

The urge to accomplish something [...or at this point pretty much *anything*, since most of us aren't all that fussy any more...] is only made more compelling by the constraints that were imposed for so long on our ability to get up and actually go *anywhere*.

Collectively, that makes the challenge of picking the right "spot" to aim for all the more confounding. Fortunately, deciding where to go from here isn't really as hard as it might sound — once you've figured out how you ended up where you currently *are*, that is. [There *had* to be a catch, *didn't* there?]



Not that there's anything wrong with occasional TimBits of progress. But if they think we'll swallow decimalized "decadecozens" with a crummy *10* donuts to a box, obviously they miss the whole point of *eating* them.

What got me thinking about "finding the right spot" was a very insightful observation made during a TV interview recently by former college and professional football player turned award-winning actor John David Washington, whose dad — Denzel — has picked up a statue or two of his own.

The younger Washington was describing the artful process of determining precisely where to stand on a theater stage — what he called the "power spots" — for your performance to make the most profound impression on your audience.

In doing so, he appreciatively acknowledged a piece of sage wisdom once shared with him by his longtime friend and mentor — acclaimed film, television and Broadway veteran Stephen McKinley Henderson, who also just happens to be a Professor Emeritus in the Theatre Department right here at UB.

And his advice on what to *do* when you *find* your spot was *spot on*. "Don't just get it *right*," he told Washington. "Get it *true*." Which

brings us back to *you* — the *true* you — and *your* "spot." Specifically, the one that — like it or not — life always seems to put you *on*.

It's not as if you can just *pick up* and run *away* from them, either, because they're literally *everywhere*. And just like cars, spots come in a variety of models — usually "loaded" more with life-altering implications than deluxe options.

Sometimes they sneak up on you as "points." ["Sorry for putting you on the spot, but what's your *point*?"] Other times they can be "dots" [...as in *www-DOT-TheEntireWorldIsNow ontheInternet-DOT-com...*] or even "periods" [...like the ones glaringly missing from virtually *every text message* composed since the beginning of the 21st century.]

Even when they're not pointedly challenging us to examine our personal values and ponder what difference our existence is meant to make in the world, the "round ones" are playing fast and loose with our lives in all sorts of ways.

A lot of Americans still haven't
Continued on Page 13



- Park-like setting
 - Beautiful new common areas
 - Parking & Laundry Facilities
 - Heat/Hot Water included
 - Erie County Senior Lunch Program
 - Pet Friendly
- 50 North Avenue, West Seneca, NY 14224

INDEPENDENT HOUSING

An Independent Housing Solution for Low-Income Seniors



668-5804

www.ucmanor.org

A program of UCHS, Inc.

"Beautifully Maintained"
- Louise, a resident

Is This the Right Spot?

Continued from Page 12

fully made peace with the way the disciples of the decimal system rolled into town one day and began nagging us to replace the fractions we all worked so hard in school to master with their supposedly easier and more practical “divide everything by 10” approach.

Not that there’s anything wrong with occasional TimBits of progress. But if they think we’ll swallow decimalized “decadozens” with a crummy 10 donuts to a box, obviously they miss the whole point of *eating* them.

Still, it’s remarkable how many people almost automatically default to an “old way good/new way bad” position because they “just don’t see what’s so wrong with how we’ve *always* done it.”

It may well be true that “if you give some people a centimeter, they’ll take a kilometer.” [I can convert that cliché back from metricspeak if you need me to, but I think you get my drift.] But that doesn’t justify being the yardstick in the mud our nation has become on this issue.

The truly embarrassing fact is that the U.S. is one of just *three* countries in the *entire world* — the other two being Liberia and Myanmar — that have yet to switch fully to measuring metrically. [The first to take the plunge was France — *in 1795!* Clearly we don’t want to make any *rash* decisions.]

After all, if they take our inches, feet and miles, how long before they come for our bushels and pecks? Our rods and our furlongs? And I don’t even want to *think* about what will become of the dash, the pinch, the smidgen and the skosh — *three* of which, by the way, actually have set numerical values. [I *could* tell you which ones, but what fun would *that* be?]

Short of jumping straight into the deep end — the depth of which I suspect is now calculated by some formula I probably couldn’t *begin* to fathom, perhaps we should at least *attempt* to transition to the magical new world of modern measuring methods. It might even prove *useful*.

For example, wouldn’t it be nice to know *not* just how many “points” the stock market rose or fell [...hopefully not “plummeted”...] but what that change actually means to our financial bottom line? A little “decimal savvy” certainly couldn’t hurt there.

Because you *know* that if just *one* of those pesky little dots is even a *single space* too far to the left anywhere in your bank records or investment portfolio, your “nest egg” could get scrambled faster than you can say “Standard & Poor” [...the global credit rating bureau, *and* quite possibly how you end up feeling after they’ve *rated* you.]

When you get right down to it, though, whether your days are taken up by looking after your investments, or by wishing you had enough money to be able to *afford* to *have* investments to look after, virtually all of us *do* spend much of our lives *looking...* for our “spot.”

That alluring, elusive, too often almost-but-not-quite-within-reach place where we “*fit*.” And where the *life* we live fits *us*.

And though our karmic travel package may not come with a TripTik, if you listen closely, you can sometimes hear the virtual GPS system that *does*, in fact, come installed as *standard equipment* inside every person’s brain.

It’s that small voice you occasionally hear trying to tell you when “you’ve reached your destination.” [Of course, if you’re like me and have more than *one* chattering away up there, you may have to listen really closely. But you’ll find that it’s worth the extra effort.]

Because the voice is *also* the one that will tell you when you’ve gotten something *really wrong*. I realize that many of you who have significant others in your lives may have been under the impression that this is *their* job. [They *are* awfully good at

it, *aren’t* they?]

In a perfect world, though, where people — and occasionally the stock market — are self-correcting, those totally well-intentioned loved ones would recognize being *relieved* of that burden for the awesome good fortune it would clearly be.

Just imagine what they could *do* with all the time they’d have freed up when they were no longer constantly on “*You*” duty. They could take up a *hobby*. Or work for *world peace*.

Or, in a pinch [...I *knew* that word would come in handy...], offer their mad monitoring skills freelance to help those poor, chronically-uncorrected people who are too *stubborn* to even listen to *themselves* let alone others.

In the meantime, there’s nothing keeping *you* from continuing on with *your* quest to find your “spot.” There’s no way of knowing how far

you’ll have to go to find it, or if you’ll *like* all the places you’ll end up passing through along the way.

But one of the hardest truths you *learn* on this journey is that you sometimes have to go where you don’t *want* to go to get to where you *belong*.

You may *not* have the slightest idea of where that is. But trust me. You’ll *know* it when you *spot* it.

© 2023 Doug Carpenter

Throughout *After 50’s* first 16 years, veteran WNY writer and columnist Doug Carpenter regularly shared his wry generational observations with readers as *Everyboomer*. He has now returned to write a uniquely-named new monthly humor/opinion column called *I Just Have 1 Question* — which he says he’ll ask and then bravely try to answer... without, he fervently hopes, looking excessively foolish in the process. [We wish him luck.]

Consumer Cellular INDEPENDENT CARRIER

Shop Repair

Consumer Cellular 100% RISK FREE GUARANTEE

PRO-CERTIFIED PRE-OWNED

blutusk TECH LLC

1-YEAR "LIKE NEW" WARRANTY

SAVE UP TO 60%!

Pro-Certified pre-owned Apple® products:
iPhone® & iPad® devices
MacBook® & iMac® computers
Accessories, Repairs & MORE!

3229 Southwestern Blvd., OP
in the Tops/Lowes Plaza behind Taffy's

M-F 10-7 • Sa 10-5 • Sun closed
(716) 352-5674 • blutusk.com