

Next Time. For Sure.

*By Dennis Payton Knight*

For putting off what can be put off for another day there is no time like the present. You can quote me on that. I practice it myself. I did it last Monday, and I did it Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and then Saturday.

Now Sunday night has arrived and I am confronted with composing a piece on the concept of time, with mere hours to get it ready for presentation to a group of astute time managers. Having not a single next time left in my pocket, I must begin.

To start, I will dig out words of inspiration from others about concepts of time, such as that saw about the here-and-now, or the no-time-like-the-present schmaltz, and never-put-off-until bromide, classic refrains of time managers everywhere.

Mark Twain does the third of those mantras one better, saying one “should never put off until tomorrow what one can do the day after tomorrow.” That is a winner because it gives me just that much more time to do what I probably should have done yesterday.

Another has been attributed to John Lennon: “Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted.” I am glad I came across that comfort this evening, because I happened to have completely wasted last week, and Lennon says I didn’t.

The French sculptor Auguste Rodin verified that very wisdom, framing the idea this way: “Nothing is a waste of time if you use the experience wisely.”

Douglas Adams, in *Hitchhikers’ Guide to the Galaxy* placed the idea of deadlines in perspective, saying, “I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they pass.”

Mahatma Gandhi, a hero of mine when it comes to keeping things in perspective, urges me – I mean us – to take things slow, saying, “There is more to life than increasing its speed.”

There exists among those in the organized world the art of simply addressing and checking off tasks as they are assigned. I know another way to avoid putting things off is to not offer to do them in the first place, but I have proven not so good at that, because for a better part of the last decade, I have made the recurring mistake of committing to crank out hokum weekly on topics like this.

I have managed over those years to produce on deadline hundreds of short pieces of varying quality and usefulness, but never without first practicing Twain’s day-after-tomorrow rule a couple of times through the week, which usually leaves me the forty-eight hours of Saturday and Sunday to forge an essay. Tonight, I have but twelve hours, because I spent last week on a road trip, following Lennon’s excellent suggestions to waste time.

When it comes to managing time, Will Rogers observed, “Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.”

I think that’s a dandy place to start. Next time. For sure.