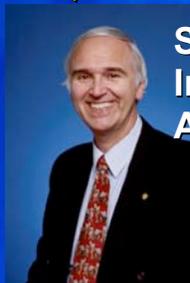


Life Lessons from the Quote Base



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In Absentia

Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the Midwest is closed today.

One lousy plane with mechanical problems gets cancelled during spring break week and suddenly Indianapolis, Chicago, Louisville, Dayton, and even Milwaukee are off-limits from Portland (I know, I tried!)

intel So thanks, Spaf, for the help ...

The Quote Base

I like pithy thoughts and a good turn of phrase, so I've saved them up for over 30 years. Some come from published sources, but many of the best come from colleagues who discovered my avocation only *after* speaking.

The Quote base has thoughts for all occasions and this one's certainly ~~desperate~~-ripe with possibility. Let's explore.

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Technology

We can't have a CS dinner without pondering the "cool stuff" we all do for a living.

Here's advice progressive and pragmatic ...

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William Gibson

Author of *Neuromancer* and other future-looking novels:

- “The future is here, it is just not evenly distributed.”

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Edsger Dijkstra

The Tide, Not the Waves:

- “... [the] future belongs to those who can find simplicity where everyone else sees only complexity.”

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Esther Dyson:

- "The Net won't change everything, but it's one more tool to overcome the destiny of biology."

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Avram Miller, Intel VP

18 October 1993:

- "Three technologies are driving these environmental shifts: Fiber, Silicon, and Software. The first two come from sand; Software comes from God or somewhere."

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Tom DeMarco

- “Computer system analysis is like child-rearing; you can do grievous damage, but you cannot ensure success.”

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Striving for Excellence

On an evening that celebrates the CS Department's best, it seems appropriate to share a few thoughts on looking to the stars ...

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Jack London:

- “You can’t wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club.”

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W. Somerset Maugham:

- “It is a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best you very often get it.”

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Investor Charlie Munger:

- “When I run into a paradox I think either I’m a total horse’s ass to have gotten to this point, or I’m fruitfully near the edge of my discipline. It adds excitement to life to wonder which it is.”

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Risk Taking

As Charlie Munger notes,
excellence often comes at the
fringes ... which can be an
uncomfortable place.

But that’s where innovation lies ...

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Admiral Grace Murray Hopper:

- “A ship in port is safe ... but that’s not why ships are built.”

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Raj Hazra, Intel Colleague:

- “I like skeptics for two reasons:
 - (a) They sharpen your game, and
 - (b) The look on their faces is priceless when you prove them wrong!”

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Mark Twain, *Autobiography*:

- “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream.”

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Janet Tolopka

On starting the week out right, 21 July 2003:

- “Nothing has hit the fan yet this morning. I may have to be the one to turn the fan on and get it going.”

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Andre Gide, Writer:

- "One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."

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Salman Rushdie, Writer:

- "If you spend your life wondering how safe you are, you'll never cross the street. And my view is: Cross the street."

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Conflict & Courage

Almost by definition, risk-taking puts you in opposition to the status quo.

That can be uncomfortable ...

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Bertrand Russell:

- “The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts.”

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Christopher Morley:

- “There is no squabbling so violent as that between people who accepted an idea yesterday and those who will accept the same idea tomorrow.”

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Betty Johnson, Intel Colleague:

- “He didn’t want to give up what he didn’t have.”

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Linda Ellerbee

- “Oh well, in this business you’ve got to have the courage of your confusions.”

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Jonathan Swift:

- “When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him.”

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Frank Zappa's Law:

- “There are two things on Earth that are universal — hydrogen and stupidity.”

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Bob Hoskins as Sancho Panza

In Don Quixote de la Mancha:

- “Honor ... I always knew it'd come with bruises ... and no money.”

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Garrison Keillor, *Leaving Home:*

- “There comes a point where you have to stand up to reality and deny it.”

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Leadership

Standing up to reality and denying it ... not a bad definition of leadership.

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General Colin Powell:

- “Leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.”

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Admiral Grace Murray Hopper:

- “You *manage* things, you *lead* people.”

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Anita Borg:

- “Well-behaved women rarely make history.”

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Open-Mindedness

It's important not to confuse far-sighted leadership with narrow-minded fanaticism.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald:

- “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”

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Jules de Gaultier:

- “Imagination is the one weapon in the war against reality.”

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John Maynard Keynes:

- “The difficulty lies not in the new ideas but in escaping from the old ones.”

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Churchill's Commentary on Man:

- “Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on.”

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Dorothy Parker:

- “You can’t teach an old dogma new tricks.”

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Samuel Butler:

- “An open mind is all very well in its way, but it ought not to be so open that there is no keeping anything in or out of it. It should be capable of shutting its doors sometimes, or it may be found a little draughty.”

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Useful Advice

That's a useful piece of advice
– a strong suit of the Quote base.

Herewith a bit more ...

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Brady's First Law of Problem Solving:

- When confronted by a difficult problem, you can solve it more easily by reducing it to the question, "How would the Lone Ranger have handled this?"

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J.R.R. Tolkein:

- “It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near him.”

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Damon Runyon

- As Sky Masterson, in *Guys and Dolls*:
- “On the day when I left home to make my way in the world, my daddy took me to one side. ‘Son,’ my daddy says to me, ‘I am sorry I am not able to bankroll you to a large start, but not having the necessary lettuce to get you rolling, instead I’m going to stake you to some very valuable advice.
- One of these days in your travels, a guy is going to show you a brand new deck of cards on which the seal is not yet broken. Then this guy is going to offer to bet you that he can make the jack of spades jump out of this brand new deck of cards and squirt cider in your ear.
- But son, do not accept this bet, because as sure as you stand there, you’re going to wind up with an ear full of cider.”

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Paul Sappho, Institute for the Future:

- “Never mistake a clear view for a short distance.”

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Woody Allen

- “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve immortality through not dying.”

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Rules for Living

Some help from the Quote Base
on how to live that immortal life ...

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Wendell Berry:

- “Be joyful, even though you have considered all the facts.”

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Lauri Minas, Intel Colleague:

28 August 1997:

- “When there’s a world of choice, why accept defaults?”

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Charles Buxton:

- "You will never 'find' time for anything. If you want time, you will make it."

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Coleman Hawkins, saxophonist:

- “If you don’t make mistakes, you aren’t really trying.”

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Alan Greenspan:

- "The true measure of a career is to be able to be content, even proud, that you succeeded through your own endeavors without leaving a trail of casualties in your wake."

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Darin Erstad, Anaheim Angels outfielder:

Explaining his intense, all-out, *carpe diem* philosophy:

- “Any game could be my last, and any at bat could be my last. I’d hate to think it ended without me giving my best effort.”

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Ellen Goodman, Columnist:

- “Sooner or later, you have to worry more about being right than being nice. You don’t worry about making someone mad. You know who you are. As for keeping the attack dogs from nibbling away your courage?”
- My theory, after decades in this business, is that you only give a few people the right to make you feel rotten. You have a handful of chits to give out, penuriously, to those you trust and respect. You don’t give them to just anyone with an e-mail address and an epithet.
- That seems to me a pretty good rule for opinion writing. And come to think of it, for life.”

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Dame Stephanie (Steve) Shirley

- “My work and life were never, ever balanced. Work is the ultimate seduction ... Work isn’t something you do when you’d rather be doing something else.”

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Annette Benning:

Exchange with *Fresh Air*’s Terry Gross,
22 Feb 2005:

Terry: “[With four children], how do you balance your family life and your career?”

Annette: “I don’t, really. Balance is over-rated. Creativity comes from excess.”

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Satchel Paige:

- “Work like you don’t need the money. Love like you’ve never been hurt. Dance like nobody’s watching.”

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Inspiration

Satchel had it right: Work is far too important to take seriously, and there’s much more to life.

That’s worth remembering ...

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Rick Reilly

Sports Illustrated, 12 April 1999:

- "The meaning of life isn't gnashing our bicuspid over what comes after death but tasting the tiny moments that come before it."

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Eden Philpotts

A Shadow Passes:

- "The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper."

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Leonardo da Vinci

On avoiding burnout:

- “Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer. Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen.”

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Ray Bradbury

Quicker Than the Eye:

- “[This] causes me to live with a boundless enthusiasm for writing and life that some misinterpret as optimism. Nonsense. I am merely a practitioner of optimal behavior, which means behave yourself, listen to your Muses, get your work done, and enjoy the sense that you just might live forever.”

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Parting Thoughts

I've long since worn out my welcome, I'm sure. I leave you with 2 parting thoughts that I hope resonate for you as they do for me.

Spaf, thanks again for the help!

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Janet Tolopka

23 March 2005:

- “Regardless of whether there’s hope, there is lunch in about 30 minutes.”

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Linda Allen, Songwriter:

In her song *Hard Work*:

- “Put your faith in the future
But your hand on the plow
‘Cause there’s hard work to do ...”

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