

Letter from a Gifted Student Now an Adult

Inside this issue:

(by Robert Graham, Ottawa, ON, Canada)

I strongly believe that the things we did in those early years of gifted programming had a strong impact on my life. Specifically, it was the challenge of looking at the world differently that still sticks with me today.

My story involves - nearly failing out of first-year engineering at the University of Waterloo because I wasn't used to thinking "in boxes" (I did graduate cum laude in the end)

- living in Japan for 4

years, learning to speak the language fluently (very fluently) because of the way I approached it in my head

- 'thinking out of the box' before it became cool... and being co-inventor of a U.S. Patent

- did an MBA at U. of British Columbia

- now I work for the Canadian Coast Guard, and working on some other interesting ventures on the side

After all this, my wife and I home school our three sons because al-

though I believe I received one of the best educations you can get in this country, I made some fundamental mistakes that I wouldn't want my sons to repeat.

Life is about finding your mission and following your dreams, and schools don't teach many of the skills necessary to do well (except during a small point in time between 1980 and 1983 in a gifted program at St. Cyril's School in Toronto).

(Note from O.S.: I met Rob when he was 10 and in Gr. 5. He read auras, bent spoons, believed in psychic powers and continued to study town planning after he left Toronto to move to Phoenix, Arizona. We have kept in touch since that time. I have watched Rob take on incredible challenges and grow strong in thinking about success instead of worrying about failure. It is great to touch base with him once in a while to see how he continues to grow and especially pass on what he learned to his children. This is what gifted programming should be all about. Thanks for the article, Rob.)

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Amazing Websites

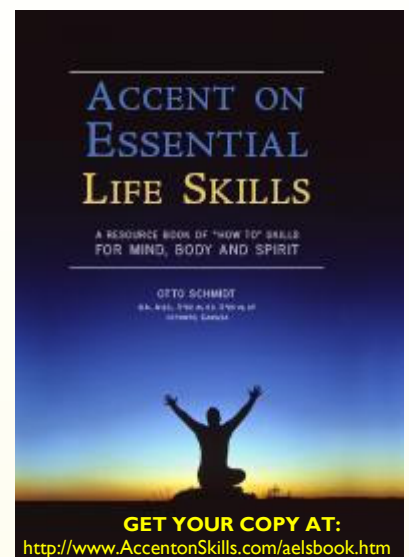
Weird Art (truly creative from the inner depths of human consciousness) <http://www.audre.org/>

Psychedelic Art (go even deeper into the human mind) <http://www.psychedelic-art.net/>

Characters from Marvel Comics (700 fascinating examples of fictional characters created for comic books) <http://www.marveldirectory.com/individuals/index.htm>

Truly Unusual (with, you guessed it, truly unusual stuff) <http://www.trulyunusual.com/gallery/>

10 Best Xmas Movies http://www.epinions.com/content_4563705988



News and Views

Let's Celebrate!

Dec 2 – International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
Dec 3 – International Day of Disabled Persons
Dec 5-12 - Hanukkah
Dec 5 – International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development
Dec 7 – International Civil Aviation Day
Dec 10 – Human Rights Day
Dec 11 – International Mountain Day
Dec 18 – International Migrant's Day
Dec 22 – First day of Winter
Dec 23 – Full Moon tonight
Dec 25 – Christian Xmas Day
Dec 26 – Kwansaa
Dec 29 – International Day for Biological Diversity
December is also Stress-Free Family Holidays Month

Our Culture of Safety (based on information from:
<http://www.isu.edu/outdoor/therules.htm>)

When our daughter was about 4-5 years old, I showed her a robin's egg that I found. I told her to be very gentle when touching and holding it. She reached out and accidentally squished the egg. She was startled but probably learned more in that one experience than she would have ever learned by simply being shown the egg and told of its fragility. The point is that insulating kids from the world does not create safety. In fact, it probably leads to more problems.

Around the world, there is a growing paranoia about kids getting hurt. Schools forbid tag, sliding on ice, snowballs, dodgeball games, trampolines, "dangerous" outdoor gym sets. Everything is being insulated, lowered, softened and netted. What are kids left with? Not much.

Here are some suggestions that are up for debate:

- learn the rules so you know how to break them properly and safely
- looking at problems in several ways teaches accident prevention

Do rules and forbidding actions really make life safer?

Risk management plans are everywhere, procedure manuals and accepted safety practices books are huge. The Association of Experiential Education has been known to charge nearly \$100 for such books.

No list of rules makes life safer. Young people, especially need to learn how to climb, jump, and handle dangerous things, even if adults don't like it.

A person must go beyond rules and build up knowledge and experience through activity with rules. Then that person must gain more experience to go beyond the rules and make them disappear. Only the meaning of them is left. Breaking or keeping them no longer matters.

For us all to be well, we must be part of a culture of participatory safety. We must all be encouraged and taught how to watch out for each other and keep the whole group safe. That is what is needed, instead of the rampant "me, myself, and I" selfishness. In some cases, a leader must be in charge to make decisions about safety but all must watch out for the other as well. All can help. It is an important way we develop a conscience and a sense of caring and responsibility for self and others. It encourages communication, awareness, noticing and observing.

Participatory safety is very important and powerful in maintaining freedom of choice and encourages decision-making in life. Avoiding "dangerous" activities may be more harmful in the long run in other ways.

Year-End Examination of the Heart

(by O.S.)

It is the end of the year and time to go on another inner journey. How was my past year and what do I want to do with myself in this next year?

Here are some suggested introspective questions to ask:

Who am I?

What am I doing to still be worthy of my life?

How am I loved and show love in return?

How do I show gratitude for all I have?

How do I show respect for the rights and dignity of others and for all life?

When do I show awe and wonder at the forces of the universe?

Do I have humility and realize that I am not a god?

How am I dependent on others in the world? How do I reciprocate?

How do I show a zest, zeal and passion for living a good life?

How do I show charity toward others and love them as I love myself?

How do I help, volunteer, show mercy, reach out to show that I am a participant and not a spectator in life?

Buddhist Examination of Conscience

<http://www.hackwriters.com/Nirvana.htm>

Examination of Conscience based on 10 Commandments

<http://www.theworkofgod.org/Library/examine.htm>

Islamic Examination of Conscience

<http://www.islaam.net/main/display.php?id=649&category=>

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Computer Top Tip

Make a copy of these shortcut keys for your computer:

Change the font	CTRL+SHIFT+F
Change the size of font	CTRL+SHIFT+P
Increase the Font Size	CTRL+SHIFT+>
Decrease the font size	CTRL+SHIFT+<
Increase the font size by 1-point	CTRL+]
Decrease the font size by 1-point	CTRL+[
Change the case of letters	SHIFT+F3
Close the active item	ALT+F4
Format letters as all capitals	CTRL+SHIFT+A
Apply or remove bold formatting	CTRL+B
Apply or remove underline	CTRL+U
Minimize all windows	Windows logo key+M
Underline single word	CTRL+SHIFT+W
Double underline text	CTRL+SHIFT+D
Apply or remove hidden text	CTRL+SHIFT+H
Find Files or Folders	WINDOWS+F
Apply italic formatting	CTRL+I
Format letters as small capitals	CTRL+SHIFT+K
Apply automatic spacing	CTRL+=
Remote formatting in plain text	CTRL+SHIFT+Z
Cancel the current task	ESC
Change the selection to symbol font	CTRL+SHIFT+Q
Display nonprinting characters	CTRL+SHIFT+*

We welcome contributions to this newsletter - articles or ideas, jokes, wise words, creative efforts, letters, trivia.

Email:

GiftRap@DiscoverTeenergy.com

Teachings of the Buddha

The recent visit of the Dalai Lama to North America, suggested that it would be worthwhile to look at the central tenets of Buddhism.

Noble Truths:

1. Nothing lasts in this world, even happiness. There is always suffering.
2. We suffer because people want more than is right and they become greedy and selfish.
3. Suffering will ease if we overcome selfishness, greed and hatred.
4. The way to achieve this is through the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path:

1. Understanding: see clearly what you want to do with your life.
2. Thought: Don't waste your time daydreaming.
3. Speech: Say only good things.
4. Deeds: Good deeds are unselfish acts.
5. Work: Do work that does not hurt others.
6. Effort: Do your best at all times.
7. Mindfulness: Give full attention to what you do.
8. Concentration: concentrate on what you have to do.

<http://www.buddhanet.net/>

Tidbits of Trivia

- the U.S. pays Cuba a little more than \$4000 each month as "rent" for the use of the Guantanamo Bay area. Only 1 check was cashed accidentally. They are not cashed as a sign of protest.

- the blade of an NHL hockey stick cannot be longer than 12 inches. A goalie stick 15 inches.

- the U.S. has the world record for tornadoes—about 1000 each year. Australia is second with a few hundred annually.

- the Yellow River in China is the muddiest river in the world. The color is from silt.

- the original Volkswagen was designed in 1936 by Ferdinand Porsche, of sports car fame.

- people seek comfort food more when they are happy.

- 49% of men and 35% of women admit to having fallen asleep on the job.

- fetuses and babies spend about 75% of their sleeping time in the REM dream state.

- 10% of children snore most nights. Pug-nosed dogs such as bulldogs and sharpies also snore a lot.

Interesting Reading

Clapton: The Autobiography by Eric Clapton. Famous musician who was a member of the band *Cream* and then made a mark as a solo performer.

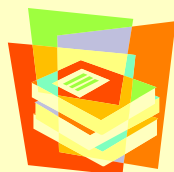
Playing for Pizza by John Grisham. Reliably exciting and interesting writer of books mainly related to the legal world. There is a collection of his novels.

Shultz and Peanuts: A Biography by David Michaelis. The story of the world-famous cartoonist.

Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light by Mother Teresa. Inspiration from this soon-to-be saint.

The Secret Language of Leadership: How Leaders Inspire Action Through Narrative by Stephen Denning.

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Gifts for the Gifted and Other Bright Lights Too

(by O.S.)

For gifted children on your shopping list, there are many things they would appreciate. Below are things that are a little more exciting than socks and underwear. In toys, look for the "Wow" factor and "open-endedness" meaning that the person must be actively engaged and there are endless ways of playing with the toy.

Gear Clock (very cool!! Major WoW Factor)

<http://www.coolest-gadgets.com/20070530/wall-gear-clock/>

Telescope (get a powerful one with adaptors) at hobby and science shops. <http://www.escience.ca/>

Geeky Binary Watch (geeky!!)

<http://www.thinkgeek.com/gadgets/watches/6a17/>

Touch-Screen Crossword Puzzles

<http://www.shopping.discovery.com/product-66123.html>

DNA T-Shirts and Ties (super cool science!!)

http://www.scienceteacher.com/dna_all.htm

Nerd Shirts inspired words for those who wish to show off

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/nerd_shirts.htm

Movies about Gifted People

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm>

Omni Magazine subscription. Creative, exciting, mind-boggling scientific and intellectual thought. For adults too.

<http://www.omnimagonline.com/>

Cricket Magazine subscription for very young children.

<http://www.cricketmag.com/home.asp>

Robotics Kits <http://www.spectrumed.com>

<http://www.robotshop.ca/>

Membership in a Math Club or Association, Photography Club, Environmental Group, Adventurer Club, Museum, Science Centre <http://www.maa.org/>

Bedlam Cube

<http://www.mindwaronline.com/MWEstore/ProductDetails/ProductDetails.aspx?pid={C8D74817-F147-4B1B-8236-9D28387EDE90}&>

Karaoke Machine <http://www.kaptainkaraoke.ca/>

Conferences on and for Children (Pay their registration fees and/or take them)

<http://www.conferencealerts.com/youth.htm>

TinkerToy <http://www.hasbro.com/playskool/tinkertoy/>

Mechano Sets www.toystorecity.com

Lego <http://shop.lego.com/Default.aspx>

Mastermind Store (lots to choose from)

<http://www.mastermindtoys.com/>

Amazing Toys & Gifts <http://www.amazing1.com/>

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Concern for the Social Order

(from an encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II)

Moral character of development includes respect for the beings that make up the natural world.

Three considerations that help us to develop this respect:

1. One must acquire a growing awareness that different categories of living and inanimate things have their own unique nature and are mutually connected in an ordered system in the "cosmos".
2. Natural resources are limited. Some are not renewable. We must not use them as if they were inexhaustible. By enforcing our own absolute dominion over them, we endanger their availability for the present generation as well as for those in the future.
3. We must examine the quality of life in industrialized zones. Industrialization produces pollution of the environ-

ment and there are consequences for the health of all.

Development and the planning of it must include respect for moral demands. This imposes limits on the use of the natural world. Our dominion over the land and animals is not an absolute power. We cannot speak of a freedom to use, misuse, or to dispose of things as one pleases.

We are subject to biological laws as well as moral ones which cannot be violated with impunity.

True development includes thoughts about the use of elements of nature, renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization.

Challenge:

Do an open and honest assessment of your impact on the environment.

- Amount of garbage you produce (do you think about it before you buy things?)

- Level of care about the environment (what do you REALLY do to show it?)

- How often do you show respect by doing simple things? (e.g. put grocery bills into paper recycling, pouring used water on a plant instead of into the sink, etc.)

- Do you care for the tiniest of living things? (worms, moulds, ants?)

- Do you actually do good works or do you just give money toward causes and let others do the work?

- What have you ever put off because it causes environmental damage? (walk instead of drive, compost leaves instead of discarding)

After thinking about the above, are you part of the problem or part of the solution?

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Jokes of the Month

I failed my driver's test. The guy asked me "what do you do at a red light?" I said, I don't know... look around, listen to the radio... (Bill Braudis).

China has a population of a billion people. One billion. That means even if you're a one in a million kind of guy, there are still a thousand others exactly like you. (A. Whitney Brown)

If I ever have twins, I'd use one for parts. (Steven Wright)

Waiters and waitresses are becoming nicer and much more caring. I used to pay my check, they'd say "Thank you." That graduated into "Have a nice day." That's now escalated into "You take care of yourself, now." The other day I paid my check – the waiter said, "Don't put off that mammogram." (Rita Rudner)

What Will They Invent Next?

Our world is changing and needs are different. In Calgary, Alberta, Canada, an ambulance has been designed specifically for transporting obese people. The staff are specially trained and will be able to transport and treat people weighing up to 1,000 pounds.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/calgary/story/2007/06/21/obese-ambulance.html>

Wise Words of Wisdom

“Education is what survives after what has been learned has been forgotten.” - B.F.Skinner

“Luck is a loser's excuse for a winner's commitment.” - Danish Ahmed

“Always give sorrow words. Grief that does not speak whispers to the over-fraught heart and bids it to break.”—W. Shakespeare

Sometimes when you least expect it, love taps you on the shoulder and asks you to step aside because it isn't your turn.—unknown.

Creativity is allowing oneself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which one to keep.—unknown.

It's lonely at the top, but you do eat better.

For every action there is an equal and opposite criticism.

May you live as long as you want—and never want as long as you live.

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