

Scattered Distortions

“There is no tomorrow!” - Apollo Creed

INFORMATION OVERLOAD: For as long as I can remember I've been searching for answers to my questions. Most of the people who know me or have known me always say I ask too many questions. So much so that I've bugged the shit out of them to the point that most have disappeared. Nonetheless my quest for answers continues.

Wonder why? So do I. I guess it would then be obvious that some of my favorite TV shows have been *The Outer Limits*, *Twilight Zone*, *Amazing Stories*, *Tales from the Darkside*, and others in this fantasy/sci-fi genre that tend to make you think more about your own life. Books, magazines, television, underground zines, and now the internet aid me in my search for answers. Sometimes the information is too much—an overload. I still have questions. My resources are greater but my time is less. So, what do I do? Who should I ask? Who can I get the correct answers from? I just want to know the truth!

My search in the great data journey has led me to publications like “F.U.C.K.” where the common person can vent their opinions, frustrations, ideas, etc. without being censored. This and other zines offer more insight of the real world by the common person and do so without censorship. Yes, there are some good mainstream magazines/products out there that are worthy of your time but I highly recommend digging a little deeper and exploring the small press world. Good places to start are with “Loompanics” and “Factsheet Five.” These will get you started on a most interesting journey into what is available outside the mainstream publications most bookstores carry.

Now, if I could only remember most of the stuff I've read. Knowledge is Power; so what if you forget a few of the details.

DISTRACTIONS: This piece written sometime between 1995-1996. It's just another typical day in the life of Planet Dan.

I can't manage to get anything done these days. There are too many distractions. Often times there are things I should be doing or want to

do but end up getting put off due to laziness, tiredness, or something getting in the way. I try to glance over two papers a day, read every piece of mail/magazine I get, respond to E-mail, read a book every so often, lift weights, write, eat, sleep, watch TV, and etc.

Lets take a look at my average day which begins at 6am. A quick glance at the local paper keeps me partially up to date with the world. Usually I only scan/glance at the first couple of pages or stories. By 7-7:15am I am out the door to start my 40-45 minute commute to work. I've got a stereo cassette and six disc CD changer in my car to keep me sane. The commercials tend to drive me nuts so I usually find myself switching stations. Call it attention deficit disorder if you want but I can't manage to stay on one station for the whole commute. This frustrates the hell out of me sometimes. When driving I stay as far away from the nuts on the road as possible. My rule of thumb is unlimited speed when needed.

Typically I get to work and pick up the financial paper to see what is up with the investing community. By 8:30am I'm ready to begin. The regular working hours are 9-6 but I consider 8-5 my hours. By the time I start getting into my work people are arriving and tend to talk it up until the 9am morning meeting. The hours 8:30-10am are the most distracting part of my day. Unfortunately this is also the period of the day when I feel the best and can typically get the most work done. From around 12-1:30pm there is the lunch "hour" and more chit chat. Around 2-3pm I'm pretty much useless (tired) due to lunch, my refusal to drink coffee, lack of activity (sitting most of the day), and office temperature (70F). Finally when I catch my second wind and really get going it's 5pm and I start wrapping up for the day. Seems I'm about 50% efficient at best. Usually mail/magazine scanning takes another hour of my day. I call it continuous education and I am one of the few people where I work that actually attempts to read/scan every piece of mail.

There is simply too much bullshitting going on during the day to get much accomplished. This often explains some peoples excuse for long hours—they bullshit too much. I get done what I can and try not to get mixed up in too much BS talk or meetings. It is hard to have the attitude that work stays at work but I've been pretty good about it lately.

Like work, the computer, mail, TV, etc. become distractions at home.

Especially the computer. It eats my time and I often wonder if it is all worth it. All these distractions and for what? Money, entertainment, happiness, pleasure?

I caught a show about “television” where they watched families and their kids watching TV. The TV was essentially the babysitter. “What would people do” one kid responded “if they didn’t have a TV?” Yes, I often wonder what life would be without computers, TV, and all these distractions. I sometimes want to escape them but I can’t—I’m addicted to these modern conveniences of life.

Distractions...can’t live with them, can’t live without ‘em.

EVOLUTION IN TWO PARTS

PART I - PHYSICAL: Late 1995 there was an interesting story in the news about a child with a rare disorder. This child, a female, was born without the ability to smile. The news flashed a picture of the girl on the screen making it obvious she had a problem. She had the type of mouth you’d see on an inflatable sex doll—always open and circular. Her parents were preparing her for an operation to correct the defect (initially on only one side of her face). Everyone was excited about the operation. Soon she would be able to smile like all the other children.

I have to admit this is quite an interesting disorder. Based on my observations I would classify this “disorder” more as an evolutionary process. Look around if you don’t believe me. Do you see people smiling all the time? I don’t. In fact, it seems to be the more we progress the less people seem to smile. Think about this for a moment. Look at what we have created. I tend to believe our societies happiness factor is going down proportional to the quality of lifestyle being created.

These days we are working more for less. We’ve got a very high standard of living but less time to enjoy it. Our time is taken up by work, commuting, sleeping, and maintaining ourselves—eating, cleaning, exercising, repairing, etc. We have done so much so quickly that we have not had the time to enjoy very much of what we have accomplished. Our happiness is fading along with our smiles. That smileless girl is a tribute to the new generation of workers who are doing more and enjoying less. It is evolution in my book but is it something we should accept?

PART II - PSYCHOLOGICAL: In this techo-punk kick ass society you will find yourself adapting to someone else's rules, problems, or situations. Assholes are everywhere nowadays. They are the inconsiderate people around you. The ones who are apathetic and only thinking of themselves—I'm sure you know the type of people I'm talking about. These type of people are "forcing" people like myself to take a "do onto others as they do onto you" attitude.

There are too many people in our world so these type of people are inevitable and worse yet they are here to stay. They spit in your face and tell you to "Fuck off," but not literally. They do it by causing you discomfort. It becomes hard to ignore the situation unless you are totally oblivious to your surroundings or one of these "assholes." So, in our ever growing world we are pushed closer together. Together with the assholes of society. You can move, face the problem, or simply try to ignore the problem.

Moving is futile because assholes are everywhere. Always thinking of themselves and not caring one iota about you or others. Facing these people makes them realize they are getting to you. Of course assholes will be assholes, as the expression goes, so this is equally futile. Ignoring the problem can cause a massive build up of anger making you extremely volatile during the times the asshole is annoying. Escapism is probably the best solution—get away from the danger zone or do something to block it out completely.

Our dollar a day society will continue to collapse within due to its own construction until we break these walls binding us. A communication breakdown is already noticeable. Class difference is becoming a wider gap. Caring and emotion is disappearing all together. We have raised a generation greedy for one's own sake. The looking out for number one farce helped cause this communication and class breakdown. How long can this system maintain stability?

Is this the type of evolution you want to see?

27 SEPTEMBER 1998 - WHEN DOES THE VACATION END: I've got about two hundred audio CDs and another thirty or so records. I'm going to go through them one at time. Eventually I will run out of music—not to mention things to do. I figure when that happens my vaca-

tion will end and my job hunt will begin. Right now I'm on the A's so I'm going to enjoy the vacation while I can.

DRIFTING FURTHER APART: I see a cold world—a world of hate where no one cares. A communication breakdown has led to this. Through my eyes people perform their tasks without regards to their neighbor. The neighbor no longer exists, only a person who is one of six billion. The “help another” attitude has sunk on the boat it came in on.

JUST LIKE ME: I see life through different eyes. Material possessions and money are not a focus of my long term goals. Money is more of a means of survival than something to work for. Money has less value to me and I know having more won't make me any happier. The same goes for material possessions—they are nice to have but don't mean very much. We are taught and learn to accept that material possessions and money are a very important aspect of life.

Not accepting many of society's standards has led me to be shunned. An outsider looking in—looking different, acting different, and having different values is what I am all about. Drinking beer, going to parties and dancing is something I don't care to take part in. Solitude is a part of me.

Feeling as an outsider causes me to see myself as such. This in turn leads people to treat me as such and the vicious cycle continues. No, I don't want to be a beer drinking party animal because that is not what I care to do. I seek an alternate reality. A reality with people who can relate and respect others like myself. They are out there. I know they are. If they are anything like me then they tend to be quiet and stay away from those other people.

“I always wanted to be a dancer but I could never get the shit off my shoes” - Sky King (Paul)

MARCH 1998 - AROUND THE CORNER: It has been a tough week for me. I'm starting to get stressed out, nose bleeds are starting up again and I feel down. I guess I'm not taking a high enough dosage of Saint John's Wort. These days I'm working a contract job which will be end-

ing in the next couple of weeks—perhaps next week. [The job actually ended about five months later.] Shortly there after the money will stop coming in but at least I'll be able to take some time off to clear my head.

The funny thing is that just when I'm out of work something new will come around the corner and surprise me. It always happens. Just a few weeks ago someone broke into my car and stole \$600 worth of stereo equipment (head unit, CD changer, CD's). So now I have to deal with the police, insurance company, body shop and getting a new system. The police had me fill out a report and the insurance company sat on my claim for two weeks before I inquired how much I was getting back. I'll only end up getting about half of what I paid after the deductible. I'm finally getting around to the minor (\$100) body work needed to return the car to the way it was. This week I got a new stereo installed—AM isn't working, FM reception isn't too good (antenna connected?). So, I'm a little upset about a missing screw here, plastic piece there and no fucking AM. What the hell. So someone steals a stereo and I end up spending twenty plus hours and a weeks salary trying to get things put back to "normal." So, just when things seem to be going well—blam—some kind of shit seems to happen to bring me right back to reality. Whether it is a pet dying, something breaking, or some fuckwad stealing my shit there always seems to be something lingering around the corner. I always end up wondering WHY ME! What did I do to deserve this? This is bullshit. One problem ends up turning into four which each take on a life of their own. And when you are finally finished putting out all the fires something else comes along and the cycle starts all over again. I'm not sure how everyone else deals with all the build up of shit but I wanted to let you know that you aren't the only one in the shitter even if my problems seem trivial. I assure you that your problems are only as big as you allow them to be. Unfortunately I'm letting mine get the better of me.

Inspiration

“If your trips are unpleasant your whole life is a vacation.” - Calvin & Hobbes

When I started this project I my intention was to create a book with scattered quotes and Calvin & Hobbes comics. However, knowing the odds of me getting permission from some tight ass corporation like UPS was next to impossible I've decided to do the next best thing and include a few quotes from my favorite Calvin & Hobbes comics. Unfortunately I had to eliminate many good comics because they wouldn't do justice without the visuals.

7 September 1992: Calvin - “People complain that the entertainment industry caters to the lowest common denominator of public taste but I disagree.” Hobbes - “You do?” Calvin - “Yeah, I think it's a fallacy that taste bottoms out somewhere. If they could find a way to aim even **lower** they'd make some **real** money.” Hobbes - “I'm sure there's a brilliant career ahead of you.” Calvin - “There **must** be a way to cram more violence into 90 minutes!”

29 September 1992: Calvin - “I say a day without denial is a day you've got to face. From now on, I'm not going to think about anything that's unpleasant.” Hobbes - “Isn't that a pretty self-deceiving way to go through life?” Calvin - “I'm not going to think about that.”

9 January 1993: Hobbes - “Watcha doin'?” Calvin - “I'm killing time while I wait for life to shower me with meaning and happiness.” Hobbes - “I hope you're comfy.”

16 March 1993: Calvin - “I don't want to get up. I don't want to get dressed. I don't want to wait for the bus. I don't want to go to school. I don't want to listen to the teacher. I don't want to study. I don't want any tests. I don't want any homework.” Mom - “How was your day?” Calvin - “It pitched a perfect no hitter.”