

The Alarm Clock Talk

December 27, 2002

Many years ago, on a weekend visit with Ted Sturgeon's family, he said, "I sit down at my typewriter from 8:00 o'clock to 5:00 o'clock every day. I treat it as a job." And I heard that same thing from a number of people who were professionals in various fields. In the field of dance, my girlfriend's best friend Cyd Charisse was obsessed by dance; she danced typically six to eight hours a day. Sandy Gresen who was the editorial assistant to *Galaxy* for some time after she left the New York City Ballet Company, and still she would spend four hours a day in dance class, just to keep her chops up.

If you were an opera singer, you'd be spending six to eight hours a day every day keeping your throat opened up, your voice box working, your air cavity and diaphragm functioning. If you were a high steel worker you wouldn't take off for a couple of months and then sort of come back and expect to be working high steel the very first minute. Everything of any skill, any kind of skill that you manage to develop needs to be in continual practice or it will degenerate to some degree, if not completely.

If I spoke German every day, it would come back to me in about a month or two. When I was in Montreal my French was relatively fluent, but a month after I left Montreal my French was all-but-gone.

I used to walk tight rope and work the rings, ropes, high bar and parallel bars, but I can't do that now. It needs constant, constant practice. "Use it or lose it". That is going to be true of any effort that requires skill.

The waking state is an acquired skill. When you get into the waking state, *it's what you're doing* that will make a difference. It's *where it catches you* that tells the tale, and you can never really know in advance exactly when you're going to slip into the waking state. You can set traps for yourself, Alarm Clocks we call them. Every so often you'll blunder into one of your Alarm Clocks and you'll wake up in spite of yourself.

Let's say you're sitting at a cubicle someplace and you have 300 office workers all around you. You can sit at a computer station and perform full body isometrics and no one would ever know. The same thing should be true of all your Inner Work efforts.

Art is a fantastic set of Alarm Clocks, painting in particular.

You're going to take advantage of already existing habits. You're not going to change those habits, not going to change what is; you're going to learn to like it and to use the method of taking advantage of an already existing situation and an opponent's own energy to defeat them. Almost every adverse situation that you ever encounter can be transformed into something good.

Maybe you're young enough to have bangs flopping around on your forehead, so you tend to constantly sweep the hair away. Every time your hand goes up to mess with your hair you're going to say, "Oh, I should use this as an opportunity to remind myself to attempt to invoke my presence." Every time you throw your head back, that action should cause you to try to remember to invoke your presence.

Now, what does "invoking my presence" mean? I Wish to Be Here Now. I am Here Now. Really that's all it takes. Just an agreement To Be Here Now, is one way of invoking your presence.

Actually you could make a living by teaching people how not to be here because most folks would rather be elsewhere no matter where they are right now. Astral projection workshop, dreaming workshop, deep-self meditation, fuzzy reality workshop, change your life workshop, are all areas where you can make an absolute fortune if you can successfully teach people to get away from here and now, to take a vacation from themselves.

Many years ago I could have set up such a system. I've always known methods of accomplishing this. If you want to make serious money and have a lot of followers, merely offer a variety of methods to enhance sleep, enhance the persona, enhance the ego and suppress the essence.

There's always the opportunity to sell sleep, sex and avoidance. Waking is not a big selling item. Typically your bigger retailers don't actually carry the awakening tools.

Awakening tools are just exactly what they sound like. They are

tools and you have to treat them with the respect you would treat all tools. Some of them are power tools, some of them are hand tools. If you're a sculptor, you would treat your chisels with the utmost respect. If you were a lumberjack, you'd have to know your tools and what they are for.

There was a fellow from Newfoundland who was a lumberjack. Parker Dickson, who was a topper and a legendary planter, saw him hacking away at this enormous tree with an ordinary handsaw. So Parker said, "Why don't you go into town and buy yourself a chainsaw? You'll get ten times the work done in a fraction of the time." So the guy goes to town, picks up a chainsaw, goes out to the north woods with the thing, spends a week out there in the wilderness, comes back after a week and he throws the saw down at Parker's feet and says, "This stupid saw doesn't do anything. It's worse! It's worse!" Parker says, "I don't understand. Let me check it out and see what's happening." So he starts it up and the other guy says, "What the hell's that noise?" A tool is a tool is a tool which is, I think, exactly what Gertrude Stein had in mind when she wrote that. In order to understand how a tool is to be used, you must understand that, first of all, there is no such thing as a Universal Tool. There are things that are sold as Universal Tools, but that's just clever underhanded marketing. There is no such thing as a Universal Tool that's good for everything.

There's a Swiss Army knife that has 98 things in it but it weighs 480 pounds, and measures 6.5 feet in length. It mixes martinis very dry, and does just about anything, including toasting. It's an amazing knife, but it doesn't do quite everything. Well, you can bring a tin can up to the thing, but it doesn't actually open the can. You have to apply energy to do that.

I discovered the ultimate can opener; it's a modified WWII hand grenade. You simply tape it to the can, pull the pin and run. A tool is a tool is a tool. No one tool does every job. No one Alarm Clock will do every job of awakening. For an Alarm Clock to work, it has to catch you. It has to catch you at the right time and at the right moment and in the right mood, under the right circumstances, so you won't reach over and turn it off.

There's a war going on within you. Let's call the opposing forces

“Infernal Demons” and “Celestial Angels”. One group wants to awaken and the other group wants to stay asleep.

The problem is in this internal war for your Soul, you’re up against a very cunning opponent who can actually convince you that you’re awakening by staying asleep, that actually the more asleep you are, the more awake you are. Think of your opponent as a dream team of particularly cunning lawyers who, when pushed against the wall will pull a dirty trick, a technicality. “I’m sorry, your honor, but my opponent did not say, “Mother may I?” or “Simon Said”

World Domination and Control happen to be one of my hobbies, like feeding the dogs their noon and midnight biscuit treats. If you try to extend your world domination beyond your own skin, even if you do manage to dominate some outside world areas, you’ll eventually run into Asia. Anyone who tries to dominate Asia has obviously never played *Risk*.

You start out any game with a noob character. It’s basically raw, untrained, has no skills, no talents, no abilities, no power, no Strength, no Dexterity, no energy, no Vitality — just this wimpy little thing. But it has been carried through all the levels through Hell itself and deposited gently at the other end of it. Having completed the game, having “finished” the game, it is now a Patriarch or Matriarch, All-Powerful. But — get it into one little game one little time and it gets creamed by one of those little quill rats.

We have this character that’s unprepared for advanced life among the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, but it has been rushed through all the levels with no effort of its own. That’s the equivalent of being touched on the forehead by a famous Guru. Yes, you can be instantly enlightened, without any of the intermediate stages, none of the preparatory work. Or you can climb the steps under your own power, gathering your own strengths of will and skill, the hard way which is the only way your gains will hold.

A noob who is totally unprepared for life in the real world, who has been “rushed” without any self-efforts that would make them strong enough to survive in the Real, Non-Phenomenal World, which includes the ability to awaken oneself rather than be awakened will inevitably falter and fail, because as sure as death

and taxes, there will be a time when inevitably — no matter who you are, no matter what you are — you'll fall asleep again, and maybe this time there won't be a Guru to touch you on the forehead, because nothing is forever, not even eternity is forever, and everything you're given for free will at some point crumble away.

When a character is rushed through the game, you don't gather much experience, and the little experience you do manage to accumulate in passing isn't the kind you'll need later on. The experience you gather as a Rushed Noob is *how to stand in a corner while someone else does everything for you*, which might be useful during the rush, because it's good to know how to stay out of the way if you are, in fact, being rushed for a purpose.

There are good purposes as well as self-indulgent ones, for a rush. If you had a high-level character that you discovered that you had put together incorrectly — you assigned skill points in a way that didn't work — it's nice to have a friend or two help you rush another character through so you don't spend a year building a character up bit by bit — but you'd delete the old character, then build a new one by the same name, of the same character class. We have to separate the character from the player, just as we separate the persona — the body-mind — from the essence, the Essential Self. The Essential Self is equivalent to the *player*, to the Body of Habits, or tendencies, as the Tibetans like to say. The *character* is equivalent to the body-mind or Lower Body of Organic Habits.

A very experienced player is going to handle a new character very differently from a noob player.

How cruel it would be if in the Diablo game, after being rushed, you didn't have the option to take the character back to the lower levels.

So, you get rushed and you find yourself wandering around in a universe in which the weakest character is now about 1000 times stronger than you. Well, if you couldn't go back you wouldn't have any way of playing the game once you're on your own. So, your only option would be to once again hang around in the corners while other characters did things. And even at that, you are at extreme risk because even a spell that happens on the other

side of the game causes collateral damage, which would include you.

Ultimately what you must do after you've been rushed is to go back and do all those things you missed doing. What's the advantage to being rushed? If you are already a very advanced player, then you know how to take advantage of a rush, but if you, the player, is as much of a noobie as your character is, then you're lost in space.

You have the disadvantage that since you've "completed" quests, you're no longer given the automatic hints and feedback because the game thinks you've already done it, so it doesn't have to tell you things.

If you've been rushed through Hell, you're not going to get the experience points except in Hell, therefore your character will actually mature much more slowly.

One of my painting teachers, Fritz Schwaderer — all of his work was burned. SS troops came in and took all of his artwork and put it in a bonfire because he was considered to be a "degenerate" artist. He was a German Expressionist. Three of his paintings happened to be in the United States during the 1930s, but only those three paintings survived. He came to the US. and he began his career all over again in 1946 as a new painter. Nobody knew anything about him. He began to work again, to develop his body of work. By 1948 he was ranked among the very top German Expressionists. Two years later, even though he was a new character, a stranger in a strange land, he was easily through extreme effort and high skills able to revitalize and rebuild his body of work.

What would it be like to be rushed through medical school? Day one you finish your comprehensives, day two you're handed a degree, and suddenly you're a doctor. They assign you a residency, you're given a practice.

I doubt that, under those circumstances, there are any underwriters who would offer you malpractice insurance. But more than that, apart from the legal and ethical ramifications of endangering every patient that comes your way, what's it going to be like to be in a situation where you *no longer are allowed to be a student*? You're a doctor. You don't have the luxury of asking

questions. You're not liable for your mistakes as a student.

Every event that takes place in your life is a potential Alarm Clock. One of the things I would like you to do is to begin what is called *Journaling*. Carry a little notebook with you. You'll transfer those notes later — maybe type it into Open Office or Word or some other electronic format every night. Every hour or so you're going to make an entry into your log book, something that you are noticing right now, this minute, about your life, your activities, your habits, about things that are happening within you and/or around or to you.

Let's say you go to *Starbucks* every morning. So the minute you walk in the door — it's called a threshold exercise — make an effort to selfinitiate the Waking State, just for a single moment. Then when you order, that's another potential Waking State Moment. Do you ever look at your watch? Use that as an exercise — ah! I should use that to remind myself to momentarily awaken NOW!

When you're reminded that you're asleep, *you will wake up*. All you need to do in order to make that work for you is to not be in denial that you're asleep. That is an easy jump unless you're somehow ashamed that you're asleep.

To not be in denial that you are asleep is the first step toward awakening. To allow a gentle reminder to awaken you is the second big step in the awakening process. The third big step is to actually use that opportunity at that moment to actually awaken. Don't say, "Remind me again in two weeks." Or hit the snooze button.

Slimeworld.org/xxaxx/jbc_ndx.html is where you will find the *Just Because* exercises. They are excellent Alarm Clock exercises that Claude Needham put there just for you — things that worked for him and have worked for many, many other individuals who have tried them over the years. Washing hands, cigarette in the mouth, fingers in the mouth, shaving, road rage, answering the phone.

Pick a point when you're answering the phone — like the point when you pick up the receiver or punch the button — that's the point that you should use for awakening — just one single point. As a matter of fact, the more narrowed-down the trigger-point the

better. The more directed, the more concentrated the trigger-point the better it will work.

Attention is our greatest tool. Attention actually *is* a tool. It can be put down. It can be picked up. It can be concentrated. It can be diffused. It can be directed. If you think of your attention as a tangible thing, a tool, you'll be amazed at how well you'll start using your attention. I'm only going to give you a hint. I'm not going to tell you everything about it because I don't want to rob you of that work. Any other potential Alarm Clocks you can think of?

Pulling out of the driveway, putting a key in a lock, going into the kitchen, picking up a pan, touching a handle of a pot or pan, picking up your fork, putting on your pants or skirt or dress, or combing your hair, tying your shoes. Not just putting on your shoes, that's too general, but tying your shoelaces. Again, you would focus it down to the point where you put the bow on. As you're doing the bow, just as you're pulling the bow tightly — that point. Sharpen down to a very exact trigger-point.

Putting the toothpaste on the toothbrush. When you first start to squeeze it on there, the moment that the toothpaste touches the toothbrush, or the moment that you pour the powder, or whatever you use, or when you reach for the toothpaste and your hand touches the tube, or the very moment that you realize that you are squeezing it from the middle again. I gave you a hint there because things that you do that you know are wrong . . . at the moment you know them, there's a kind of a wrenching in your gut; you know you did wrong there. Those are always great Alarm Clocks — the things where you know you are doing something wrong — that's a great Alarm Clock. That twinge where you say to yourself, "God, I don't believe I'm doing this!"

How about when you're just about to drift off to sleep? There's a little point there where you go through a little shock wave into sleep. That's a good point to wake up just for a moment. You don't have to stay permanently awake — that's not the goal. We've had cases where people stayed in the waking state for several months, days, weeks, months. We call them Waking State junkies. This is not a good thing.

What you want to do is hit the waking state just for one single

moment.

It's a gentle process, not something harsh and brutal like some new form of self-flagellation.