

THE STRAIGHT SHOT

Recess Director by Jess Hardin



I wonder if we don't spend a bit too much time griping about how much there is to do. We fret that as soon as one thing is fixed another something breaks. How as quickly as the last of our known tasks is completed, several more situations jump up to take their place, demanding our full attention, cheating us out of the time we scheduled to relax and enjoy. We imagine what we'd do if only we could retire from work, get someone else to split the firewood, and kick back!

Nonsense, I say! Truth is, most of us aren't nearly as spooked by hard work as we are by the specter of the "end of the list" — an improbable event whereby there'd be nothing urgent needing tending, and no excuse not to relax. An unending series of chores saves us from the potentially frightening experience of time alone with ourselves, long and quiet moments when we might have to confront and actually deal with our repressed grief or unacknowledged fears, the fact of our unmet needs and remaining unfulfilled dreams, the unavailability of death and our relationship with what we call God or Spirit, the call to an unknown mission or purpose or the essential meaning of

our lives. Each new item we add to our "to do" list spares us from having to make on-the-spot decisions about how to best allocate our finite and fleeting mortal hours, keeps us too busy to ponder the changes we might have to initiate in order to make those hours more sentient, significant and satisfying. While we talk about how much we'd like a vacation, we often come up with new tasks to fill any unscheduled days. In spite of our complaints about the normal work load, deep inside we may feel a bit panicky if faced with the prospect of an extended break, and the approach of "free time" can sometimes feel like we're approaching the edge of a cliff from which we might fall. A majority of us subconsciously count on the ceaseless rotating demands of our daily lists to hold us back from the brink.

There's enough busy-ness in simply taking care of one's self, family and home to keep the mind fully occupied, thus denying us the silence that teaches and the stillness that restores. Add to this a desire to excel at rodeo barrel-racing, trying to make enough money to put one's kids through college, the urgency of house and auto repairs, and favors long owed to others. You've likely read stories of the everyday men and women who inherit a big chunk or win millions of dollars at the lottery, who nonetheless soon go back to the familiarity and routine of their old job at the mill, the highway department or local gas station and convenience store. We all know fathers who spend weekend and vacation hours at their office or shop, mothers who feel like they're cheating their child if they have a single minute to themselves, and kids anxious to go back to school in the Fall be-

cause they're so m e h o w managed to get bored with their summer of liberty.

And then if you feel like you've got a mission, for goodness sake, you might as well forget about sleep altogether! It's the same whether that mission is preaching the gospel, abolishing the United Nations, protecting or destroying our precious Second Amendment rights! I'm hardly immune myself, getting pissed about the destruction of rural cultures as well as wild places. The planet is being flattened for parking lots, the elderly are getting screwed on their medicines, government is increasingly controlling every aspect of our lives, and the architecture of the once woolly West is being replaced with tasteless office spaces and duplicate strip malls. And by golly, I've got to be the one to do something about it!

All my hurry and bother comes to an abrupt halt — like it or not — the moment my wife's hands begin to rub just about any part of my tension-filled body. Her touch can be light and sweet, or a pointy elbow shoved hard enough into a sore neck to get my immediate and complete attention. With a bend of her eyebrow, she hooks everyone in the family like we were errant trout. A computer or unfinished article doesn't hardly stand a chance. Neither does a garden shovel or water bucket, or even a letter that's long been waiting to be written. Even our little girl Rhiannon is told that she "obsesses." We're each in turn derailed — no doubt for our own good — by the woman we've come to call the "Director of Recess."

Just like Santa Claus, Loba knows "whether we're naughty or nice." And like Dr. Spock or our Fairy Godmother, she also knows what's best for us. What's "best" may be this: That we learn to value our free hours doing what we like most, or time spent with our loved ones, more than we value making money. That we play as much as we work, try to turn our work into play, and always remember that having toys is not the same as having fun. That we take our shoes off to run in the rain, take a few minutes just to appreciate the smell of fresh cut hay or the view of the mountains from the porch. That we set aside our always important and timely tasks in order to give thanks, to sing (on-key or off-key!), to give friends and family the energy they deserve, to cultivate our relationship with Creation as well as the Creator.

Excuse me, but it looks like I'll have to cut this short, as once again the Director of Recess has her way with us. For now at least, we surrender the well meaning interruption, to the experience of the unplanned present moment, the smile she wears and the muffins she's baked.

REWARD!

A reward is being offered for arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for vandalism and damage at Kelley's Tax and Accounting Service, located at 63085 Hwy. 101 in Coos Bay. The event took place on July 24 between the hours of 10:00 PM and Midnight.

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