

The Happiness Solution Newsletter

March 2008



I have always loved books. They have been an important part of my life. I believe they have changed my life in important ways. In honor of books, the ones I've read, and the ones I've written, this newsletter is focusing on them.

Quote of the Month

"Once a book is mine, I see no reason to read it with kid gloves. And if you have ever seen a printing press disgorge best sellers at 20,000 copies an hour, you might be tempted to agree. It is the content of books that counts, not the books themselves - no matter how well they furnish a room. Indeed, the ability of books to survive abuse is one of the reasons they are such remarkable objects, elevated far beyond, say, Web sites. One cannot borrow a Web site from a friend and not return it for years. One cannot, yet, fold a Web site into one's back pocket, nor drop a Web site into the bath. One cannot write comments, corrections or shopping lists on Web sites only to rediscover them (indecipherable) years later. One cannot besmear a Web site with suntan-lotioned fingers, nor lodge sand between its pages. One cannot secure a wobbly table with a slim Web site, nor use one to crush an unsuspecting mosquito. And, one cannot hurl a Web site against a wall in outrage, horror or ennui. Many chefs I know could relive their culinary triumphs by licking the food-splattered pages of their favorite cookbooks. Try doing that with a flat-screen monitor." - Ben Schott, in the March 4, 2007 *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*

A Bit of Humor?

A middle-aged gentleman came to the office for his first consultation. His opening words to me were, "My wife is poisoning me." He pleaded with me to talk to her. Being the curious type, I agreed to call her during the week. The following week, he returned for his second appointment. I told him that I had spoken to his wife for almost two hours. His eyes opened wide as he waited for a further response. "You want my advice?" I said. "Take the poison."

Story of the Month

"My First Ticonderoga"

All of my friends and colleagues tell me I should use the computer to write my books. They rave about the ease of shifting paragraphs around and so on. I tell them that I write my books using pads and pencils. They shake their collective heads in dismay. I guess I'm a dinosaur. So be it.

I'm just not a high tech kind of guy. Maybe I'm a bit slow to jump on the latest and greatest. My wife and children will tell you that I'm very low maintenance. I don't know the names of clothing designers. I have no idea what the hot cars are, and 60-inch TV screens don't interest me. I think the way I write my book reflects me and my values. I use extra thick yellow pencils with big erasers. I guess these pencils are made especially for little kids. On each pencil are the words "My First Ticonderoga."

The pencil erasers get quite a workout. The eraser and the pencil seem to be used up about the same time. Depending on my mood, sometimes I'll just cross out words or paragraphs rather than erase them. Sometimes, halfway through a story, I'll crumple the paper and start over. I try to write stories that let you know who I am and what I believe in. The main goal I have is that each story helps you in some way. This story about my being a low-tech guy who writes books on pads using kids' extra-thick pencils with huge erasers is about the following:

- Making mistakes is inevitable, unless you're dead.
- Give yourself permission to erase, without feeling like you failed.
- It's fine to reevaluate.
- Have goals and work toward them passionately.
- Trust yourself.
- Sometimes, your way may be fine for you even if it's not the newest and most improved version available.
- Don't give yourself a hard time.

It's quite possible that after reading this story, you'll think I'm a lousy dresser who's behind the times and is too lazy to learn a word processing program that would make his writing a lot easier. But since I don't give myself a hard time and always give myself the benefit of the doubt, I'll go with a different conclusion - I like writing in the great outdoors with my 8x11 pad and my first Ticonderoga.

Recent Research

Conventional wisdom (as well as previous research) has it that religiosity is always good for your health. But a January 2008 study reported in the journal *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* presents a more complicated picture. When adult women stop attending religious services, they are three times more likely to experience certain psychological disorders, including generalized anxiety and alcohol abuse, than are women who continue attending services. However, it's just the opposite for men. Men who regularly attended religious services as children and as adults were at a higher risk for depression than men who ceased attending in adulthood. It may be that the women missed the socialization and support of the religious community, while the less sociable men were okay retreating to the comfort of more solitary activities. Unfortunately, the study didn't address the variable of spirituality independent of attendance at religious services. Of course, both men and women can believe in God or have important spiritual leanings regardless of where they are or are not.

Nutrition Corner

People who eat legumes such as dried beans, peas, and lentils at least four times a week lower their heart disease risk by 22 percent, according to a Tulane University study. Legumes also lower artery-clogging LDL ("bad") cholesterol, and they don't spur the blood sugar spikes that can take a toll on your heart over time and lead to diabetes.

A Heartwarming Story

Take a few minutes to watch and hear this moving story. It's worth your time. Go to: www.stservicemovie.com

An Odd Request

Please do not order *The Happiness Solution* this month. The book has been acquired by Goodman Beck Publishing and is between printings. It should be available in April.

The stories on the website have been updated. Check them out at:
www.thehappinsssolution.com