



SPIMail

February 2006

12th Edition

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Websites

www.apa.org

*American Psychological Association
Website*

www.spim.org

*Society of Psychologists in
Management Website*

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Welcome!

Welcome to the February 2006 edition of SPIMail. My apologies for the delay in sending out this newsletter; my travel schedule has been quite demanding recently. On the subject of travel, it was great to see so many of you at the SPIM conference in San Francisco! Even with all the new faces, the intimacy of our group is palpable.

I hope you enjoy the poem I've included in our Favorites section, titled The Guest House by Jelaluddin Rumi. Also, take a few moments to read our member spotlight. Our featured colleague is Dick Kilburg.

I look forward to seeing you all again at the 2007 conference in Washington, DC.

Happy Spring!

Leslie Mayer
Newsletter Editor

Member News & Highlights

George Watts has a new radio show on WCPT AM 850 on Sundays from 11:00 AM to noon. The show is "The Business Doctor." It is a lively show with authors, prominent politicians, sports leaders and business executives. Each week a new topic on unlocking your career potential is explored...the show is all about how behavioral science can improve your career and leadership. The program is on the Air America station in Chicago. George plans to have SPIM members on who have published books or important articles to give air time and enhance the reputation of SPIM.

Member Spotlight - A Conversation with

Dick Kilburg

What is your experience of your 60th Birthday now that you're on the "other side" of the actual event?

I think there's a sense of relief. These decade marks tend to be a little more meaningful simply because in our culture we make them so. 60 is in some respects the demarcation of age. You become eligible for all kinds of discounts. People treat you differently. For example, my staff held a party for me last week. They had no idea of my age up to that time. They bought me humiliating gifts, all had a good laugh, all of the cards were about going down hill, etc. Actually, both physically and psychologically, I don't feel any different than 15 years ago except that I know I am different. The most acute thing is the awareness of time shortening. When you get to be this age, having lived through this many decades, you have an appreciation for how long things take. I know how long it takes to write a book, see change in an organization, to see change in a client, etc. When you turn 60 and know what average life spans are, you think -with limited time left - how do you want to spend it? What's feasible to accomplish? If you want to read and write books- both of which I greatly enjoy, which ones will I select? I don't have infinite time. If you're making a difference in others' lives, how do you use your time wisely to make that difference? It's led me to do some very different things. For example, I've been asked to run for office in various organizations. I've declined. I could do it and make a contribution but the best contribution I make is to read, think and then write about people's lives and how you work with them, engage them, etc. It's really interesting. I don't think I'm any smarter than anyone else in the field, but one of the things I know I do differently than other people is to be willing to write about what I think, to read wisely. Others have found that really useful. It's been really gratifying. I've got 15, 20, 25 yrs left; there's only a certain amount of things you can do. It's different than when you're 30... feels like you've got enough time to do anything. I think that's the primary set of thoughts.

Is there any change in the way you view or apportion your social time?

No change in that. I have a very wide circle of colleagues. If they lived in Baltimore, we'd probably be great friends. When you live far away, it's hard to be friends in a true sense, even though there's an emotional bond that gets established. Basically, I've got a very narrow group of friends and then there's family. I'm actually a pretty introverted person. At work, I can play against type and be outgoing. I'm pretty cozy just curling up with a book or in front of a computer writing something or just chasing down my own projects. If you're more of an extrovert, there may be a desire to finally edit your relationships, but I've never had a large bunch of friends so there's not been much change there.

Can you comment on the notion that high achieving people sometimes confuse what they're able to do with what they're

temperamentally suited to do?

I think I've been blessed to have figured out what I wanted to do at a very young age (I was 19 when I decided to be a psychologist). At my age I can look back and say that although I could have done a couple of different things, I still don't think I would have changed what I did professionally. It's been extremely rewarding. I just can't think of trading it for anything else. So I've never really had a time in my professional life where I've hungered to be someone else. Naturally, at times I've been bored and at those times I changed the nature of my activities. I know and have worked with people who made choices in their 20s or 30s and found themselves saying, "This isn't me."

So far, so good...



Management within the university setting was a very specific decision on my part. I woke up on my 35th birthday and the first thought I had was: if you live an average life span, my life is half over. This sent me into a reflective state for a period of time: What do I want to do with the rest of my life; it's been an interesting ride so far, etc. I was working at APA and directing professional affairs, getting a real sense of self in a professional community and national exposure. APA was wonderful for that. You get to know a lot of the national names and work with them. My choice was to go in the direction of CEO/President of an organization if I was really motivated because I thought I had what it took. I also knew that I had this real creative streak in me. So I spent 2-3 years gathering information, thinking about what I wanted to do, looking at MBA programs, masters in Public Administration, Executive MBA's, having decided that it would be wise to get an additional degree. During the same time period, I had written a short novel, gotten some reviews back and although the novel was rejected, some reviews were encouraging. I thought, "I've got this creative thing and also this leadership thing." I spent a couple of years sorting it out and then something serendipitous happened. My ex-wife was then working at Towson University. They were opening up a new Masters Degree in writing. One track was creative writing. I decided in that moment that I was going to, at least, try that. It was pretty easy for me; I could enroll at a discounted price, so I got the enrollment materials and starting taking that first class. For seven weeks, I was in a class with English teachers and it seemed like they spoke Swahili! They all seemed to have an inner knowledge and I didn't know what they were talking about. I asked the teacher to help me. I said, "I'm lost but not dumb. I have a PhD, etc. but you're talking a language I don't understand. I'm a behavioral scientist, but I can't understand this. Is there anything you can suggest that I read?" She gave me references, so I chased off to the library, I read for a couple of hours and the whole thing unlocked for me. I learned that if you could count words, sentences, paragraphs, look at prose through an empirical eye, you could construct conversations. In the next class, we were comparing the writing of Ben Johnson against more modern prose styles. I had actually done things like analyze numbers of words and sentences, and I could understand and talk with them about it. As soon as that happened, I was a happy camper and I finished the degree. As soon as I finished that course, I knew I wouldn't do big-time administration. The creative part was calling me strongly. I've held to that. I've stayed out of senior administration, done my work and made a

What will they think of next...

Levi Strauss is designing machine washable jeans specifically for iPod users. The design includes a pocket with its own iPod docking cradle, attached headphones and a remote control.

contribution to Hopkins, etc., but the emotional and intellectual centerpiece of my life has been my writing. And that all started at the age of 35.

So going back to age 60, I'm thinking of all the books I could write, which are the ones that I should write? Which would be the most meaningful to me and those who read my stuff?

How do novels fit into that question?

Well, I would love to have another audience. I'm peculiar in terms of the fiction that I write. I've not been able to get a publishing company to publish them. In the last decade, I've said, "If I got a novel published, my life would change radically. I would probably find it easier to do less psychology...work a lot less. My next project is to revise a novel I finished 2 years ago.

What is it about the novel form that draws you more at this point than writing about professional reflections?

A couple of unique things...(not just novels—also poetry)...when you sit in front of a blank screen or piece of paper and you're involved in trying to create something from scratch...you're trying to describe an image or feeling you have, you enter into a dialogue that is absolutely unique. You enter into something that is different from any other conscious altering experience, i.e., psychoanalysis, drugs, alcohol. When you do this, you find other worlds in yourself that you didn't know existed. I've talked to other writers about this at writing conferences and I've read a lot about it. What seems to happen is that these characters appear and they're surely part of you and yet they're not...they take on their own lives, have their own thoughts, feelings, experiences. I know what this character needs to do. I sit down and try to make the character say, think or feel that and the character refuses. Something else comes out. It's like you're possessed...in a really good way. When that happens, you're in a dialogue with parts of yourself that you haven't known. It's an exploration, a synthesis of what's going on in your unconscious that I've never experienced. The creation of a character is deliberate, but once the person becomes alive, you never know when that character is going to appear or is going to be talking to you. You can be anywhere and the character says, "I've been thinking about what you want me to do and that's not what I'm going to do or feel." You feel almost schizophrenic. You know you're not, but you've created something else inside yourself. I can only describe them as moments of purity, when a character says something that's so absolutely "right" in the moment. You find yourself being stunned, (I didn't know that's what I thought, or one thought about that!) You can't "will" it out of you. Writers block is when you lose connection with that world...that part of you dries up. It's horrendous.

Have you experienced writers block?

I don't think I've ever really had a legitimate case of writers block. I will procrastinate, but having done as much therapy as I've done, what I've learned to do is trust my unconscious. If I'm not drawn to writing for a period of time, or if I sit down and I'm having trouble,

I've learned not to fight myself on that. I've learned that there's some sort of gestation that's occurring. Some part of my mind isn't ready. I can only describe it in that way. There literally is a part of you that's living outside of your awareness. You're only going to know what happened later. I think everyone has that capacity/lives that way and one of the nice things about having psychologists as colleagues and friends, people don't think you're weird because many have had those experiences. It's learning to trust those reports/experiences; they don't always come at your bidding. If you invite it and don't abuse it and don't send it disrespectful messages or be afraid of it (of what comes out), it keeps revealing itself to you. I think people horrify themselves at times with what they think and feel. If you can stay steady with it and accept that sometimes terrible things that are part of you, you get to integrate those things. That's part of self-actualization. You always know when you're reading a novel or poem when the person was in touch with himself. You know when you read something that's just *blinding* that the artist was in that space. I have a son who's a musician. We've talked about that. His experience of that is in sound.

How would you apply these insights and experiences to our community of SPIM?

A Grad school course comes to mind in which I took a personality assessment. We were talking about the role of psychology in the world. I didn't know I thought this but I came home one day and wrote a paper in a couple of hours. The metaphor I used was that in the post-modern world psychologists and those like us are in some respects the new priests. We're healing agents, we're spiritual agents, no matter what our sub-specialty is, it's really all about enlightening the human experience. A guy who used to work at APA, Meredith Crawford, (the godfather of military psychology and a really smart man) and I had a discussion about this long ago. We were talking about the role of psychology in the early 80s and he said that psychologists did their best work when they "stick their nose into other people's business." We really help illuminate, help people see things about their world, their families that they really hadn't seen before. When you hear people talk about their best work, that's in there. Literally, *lighting candles in the darkness*.

That's what creative writing is all about, too. You're using whatever experience you have to illuminate the darkness. We go into families, groups, try to study what's going on there and turn on the lights. So whether I'm writing fiction or non-fiction, or doing individual coaching or organizational work, that same sensibility is there – like my discovery at 19. I wasn't afraid to go into those dark places. I've always found it kind of interesting and often entertaining.

How about compelling? Maslow is reported to have said that the self-actualized individual is one that is doing "what he must do—as the painter who must paint."

I don't feel my passion as a compulsion. It doesn't feel like that any more to me. Certainly, growing up as a kid, it felt like "this is what I had to do," that sense of drive, but what I think I've learned is that I could do a lot of different things with my time and my energy.

But I've spent time with the question of, "What is my gift?" I think everyone has them. What I find myself working on now is, "What is the best way to express your gifts?" It feels passionate, but it doesn't feel like a compulsion. It feels like a choice. I get to write today. How absolutely wonderful! What fun!

Each of us has all kinds of capacities and I think that part of one's task/journey in life is literally trying to create experiments where you uncover them. The most blessed are those that uncover and get to express them. I think about my father. He was extraordinarily gifted as a mechanic...didn't matter what kind of machine...he could figure out how it worked, take it apart, figure out what was wrong with it, and put it back together without a manual. He was serene when he was doing it. He was in a "zen" state with machines. I came to really admire that about him. He never aspired to anything else. I got really frustrated at times, but the older I got, I came to understand that choice. He had other opportunities but he always backed off of them. He just loved machines. When he was close to 80, I remember one time that he stood in the living room and said to me, "Are you happy in what you do"? I said, "Yeah, I really am." He said, "If you can get up in the morning and look forward to what you have to do in that day, you have about 90 percent of life locked up." He had a 9th grade education and he understood the world in his own particular way. I really think what Maslow was saying is: Whatever you are, if you're able to find that and find ways to express that, by the end of your life, you will feel that your life will have had real meaning."

That makes two of us...



Mark Your Calendars!

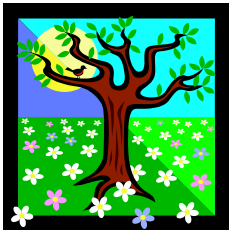
SPIM's Mid-Winter Conference

Plan for Future Meeting Cities and Dates

Washington, DC: March 2 - 3, 2007

New Orleans: February 29 - March 1, 2008





Favorites...

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Jelaluddin Rumi