



## Finding the Culprit

by Craig Bouquin

Every once in a while I find it necessary to revisit my goals. I don't mean goals for professional growth, or goals for my financial future. I mean —“what do I want?” I work very hard toward the achievement of goals.

I do all the right stuff in life. I go to work, and owe everybody money. I follow the lead of visionaries like “Ward Cleaver” and “Ozzie Nelson.” I go to all the *Wal-Mart Eats their Young* meetings. I have spent countless hours practicing looks of disdain in the mirror in order to respond properly in pompous judgment of tattoos and nose piercings. I rehearse muttering “Kids today!” while looking down my nose. These things take practice.

I am a good father, and my wife lets me take out the garbage. I practice hating all the right people—while I smile at them and shake hands. I have lost track of whether I hate my job, or love it. No matter, I just continue to do it. They give me money for that. Getting money. I guess the money sort of brings me back to the question “what do I want?” I can't remember all the things anymore. I used to know.

Some of what I used to want was stuff, and some was the want of doing things. I remember fishing was on the doing list. Having a real big piece of property out in the boonies was one of the stuff things. It would have to include a lake with a swamp on one end. I can't remember why it needed a swamp, but I know this was part of the stuff I needed for my favorite doing things.

Having the stuff required for the doing part was always accompanied by some wanting, because I never had the money, which is why I ended up working—so they would give me stuff money. Of course picking out stuff to buy for doing became more difficult as stuff and money arrived on common ground. Having enough stuff money just made me want better stuff. Better stuff, better doing. It's simple math. So I go to work more—they give me more money for better stuff, so I can do better doing. But then I would forget again what it was I would do.

This revolving process has had some positive effect. It has honed my skills at forgetting about what I want. I simply continue the pursuit of it more freely having lost the burden of thinking about what I want because I repeatedly forget what it was. A self-supporting anomaly.

Along with the ever-near success of getting stuff and doing things came my marriage and children. I look back at this and see the error of my ways. I spoiled my family early on. Now they expect food and shelter as a normal, given condition. It's my own fault. I should have explained to them about the stuff and doing thing—as being the reason I work. I may try that.

Maybe I should wait until after my third daughter starts college. That way I will need more money and won't be able to buy stuff. So, I'll need to work more, and I'll forget what I wanted anyway. I bet it was really great stuff, and the doing part would have been terrific. It probably had something to do with the lake and swamp. It's not important. I'll just work more and get the money. It is, after all, how I'll get what I want.

The thought has occurred to me that I may never get what I wanted. I may end up sitting on

the porch someday with a few Grandchildren showing me cool rocks, or bugs they found. I'll entertain them with goofy Grandpa faces and silly tricks. We might walk along a brook, and try fishing with little bright colored kid-sized gear and tell stories about how big the fish were and find new ways to get hooks stuck in Grandpa's hair. Afterward, we might find ourselves staring into a campfire, lying on a blanket with our chins resting on our crossed arms. The youngest eyes might begin to close in cadence with dimming embers. Grandpa and a bunch of little kids—all in a row. I might fall asleep too. Then I could dream of the lost opportunities in getting all that stuff I wanted and all that time to do things. All those great plans lost. A life of failure. I can only hope.

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