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**Musings**

By Robert Morton-Ranney

The obnoxious intrusiveness of cell phones first became clear to me when the theme from Star Wars interrupted a wedding I was attending. Of course, the offender was actually its owner, who had neglected to turn it off.

Any day now I expect it to become standard practice for the first words out of the mouths of all funeral officiants to be a reminder to stow your electronics.

More and more, we see people sitting at coffee shops and delis mesmerized by laptops or punching into their Blackberries, gazing fondly at their pagers during parties, and everywhere adorning their ears with the magic of Blue Tooth. The medical community is even considering a new category of repetitive motion injuries just to keep up.

Bank tellers must endure customers tending to other business while they're being served, and motorists jockey to avoid skate-

boarders who roll and call at the same time. The worst case of cell phone abuse I've experienced is watching a father skating around an ice rink with his 3-year-old daughter in hand and his trusty telecommunicator at his ear. Again, it wasn't the phone's fault.

Seems it's hard to remember that if you can turn it on, you can turn it off.

Do children know what it's like to play with wooden blocks? Do adults realize the value of concentrating on one thing at a time? There is a beauty in attending to the here-and-now that can be apprehended only after all other distractions have been dispensed.

I can see the day when each of us will have an invisible omni-function chip implanted in our front teeth, allowing us to communicate with anyone, anywhere, and project onto the nearest wall any email, Webpage, or feature-length movie. The optional credit-card-sized keyboard in your wallet will allow you to compose the written responses of your choice.

The standard complaint around our increased ability to stay in touch and available is that we never really get away. The boss/client/employee can pull us back out of our recuperative, regenerative, recreational pursuits at the speed of light. With a single click,

further chances of rest or romance are instantly extinguished. Woe is us, we cry. Will we ever truly have time off again?

Retirement beckons. Leisure, says the dictionary, is "free time," or "time at one's own disposal," and heaven knows we need some of that every day. But how much of it is good for us, really? To be 'at leisure,' again according to the dictionary, is to be "not occupied." A little time doing that is quite delicious. But, then again, too much . . . The French call it 'ennui,' for "a mental weariness from lack of occupation or interest."

Fascinating creatures, human beings. When our activities exceed our energies, we become weary from exhaustion. When our sources of activity dry up, our minds are weary from lack of use. It does seem that we need a certain rhythm of purposeful functioning that will draw on the energies we enjoy using, punctuated by periods of rest and diversion that will be just enough to refresh for the next round.

You won't catch me with a Blackberry on the beach. Truth be told, I try to avoid the beach anyway, and even when I have to go I'm afraid of getting sand in anything I bring along. But if someone else wants to brave sun and surf while fitting in the satisfaction, or necessity, of completing another task, it's okay with me.

So many people literally work at their sailing, or gardening, or tennis, or golf, or any of the other thousands of options we use to fill what we come to call our spare time that it is often difficult to know how the term leisure applies anyway.

What we need is a rhythm of life that works for us, and for those we are closest to.

The fancy bells and whistles are here to stay, and, if the iPhone is anything to go by, there will always be something more spectacular just around the bend. It's tremendous that so many things engage us.

And not all of them beep.

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**LEGAL TIP**

A couple can be sued for a fatal car accident caused by their babysitter after he'd picked up their child from daycare, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals has ruled.

The defendants employed a man who worked for them on an irregular schedule as a babysitter and landscaper, paying him varying amounts and sometimes in barter. On the day of the accident, he picked up the couple's child in his own car and did not expect to be compensated for gas, but believed he was on duty as a babysitter and said he was later paid. The mother said that the driver asked to pick up the child in order to take him to a picnic at the driver's parents' house and was not later paid.

The court allowed the case to go forward on whether or not the babysitter was under the control of the parents.

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Bruce McIntyre

**McIntyre cited for state efforts**

Bruce W. McIntyre, esq., board counsel of the Rhode Island Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline, a member of the Rhode Island Bar Association House of Delegates and chairman of the Bar's Fee Arbitration Committee, received the Distinguished Service Award at the 95th annual meeting of the Federation of State Medical Boards, a national non-profit organization of 70 state medical boards.

McIntyre was honored for playing an invaluable role in authoring and shepherding legislation through the state legislature, which led to landmark board cases with citations at both the Superior and Supreme Courts in Rhode Island.