

My favorite physics formula is: Work equals force times distance. It's so clear and simple. I believe the term scientific types use for such a formula is 'elegant.'

Dig a rock out of your garden and roll it across your yard, and you've done some work. Dig a bigger rock out of your garden and roll it across your yard and back and again, and you've done more work.

If only formulas and real life went together as easily.

Did you think about your labors on Labor Day? Most of us concentrate on food and frolic (which goes for just about every holiday,



Musings

By Robert Morton-Ranney

of course, but, anyway . . .), and leave reflection for only those moments when it is truly necessary.

We ask so much of our work. We want it to engage us, stimulate us, entertain us, and satisfy us. Oh, and it has to support us, too. That's a lot for one activity.

The most belabored (yes, words

work, too) practice is to ask work to be a shorthand for our identity. Conversely, we hope that it will be the best introduction to others we meet. "And what do you do?" has been repeated more often than could possibly be determined, even by the laws of physics. Wouldn't it come as a surprise if the response, for once, had nothing to do with a job?

Vocational choice experts tell us to follow our passion, and promise that if only we will abandon ourselves to it, everything else will fall into place. All well and good if you're one of the few who just can't wait to get to the next meeting, or make the next phone call, or tote the next wheelbarrow. But

a lot of people simply don't have passions that fit into any clearly identifiable slot in the world of remuneration. Indeed, other experts claim that fully half of all workers seek jobs simply because they have to. There is, after all, that little matter of paying the bills.

There is also the question of how one compares the value of tasks performed. Gone are the days, if ever they really existed, when each person took the fruits of their labor to the market (which, in this image, would be an actual location), and usefulness and quality could be compared. Nowadays, our purchases are of goods produced by teams of people, large and small, and usually we have no idea how many were involved or what their cut is.

Whose work is of value to us, in the series of actions that happens before we get the result we want? The person who takes the order at the store, sends it to the factory, makes the table, loads it on the truck, drives it to the warehouse, calls us with notification of delivery, or carries it into our home? The answer is, of course: all of them. On the inside, however, their tasks will be remunerated separately and differently.

Then there are services provid-

ed. There's nothing to take home in a bag. Somebody just tells you something, or takes care of something on your behalf, or fixes your car, or alters your house. We trust that what has transpired is useful. Yet, we can't be certain of what the value of its impact will be, and in many cases we couldn't begin to compare it with available alternatives.

Stay-at-home parents unite. You are proof that not all work is carried out for money.

The most disappointing aspect of work life continues to be that people often choose categories on the basis of how they will sound at cocktail parties. It takes a long time to learn that how we look to others matters far less than how we feel within ourselves, and many a bouncy recitation of titles and assignments masks a growing mound of resentments and frustrations.

To the extent that one is free to do so, it seems the best choices begin from the inside out. They do say the devil is in the details. And it seems the details of work reveal themselves slowly; some expected and some a complete surprise.

Hope you enjoyed Labor Day. And I hope your days of labor are okay, too.



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was a great success!

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Watson Farm painting class set

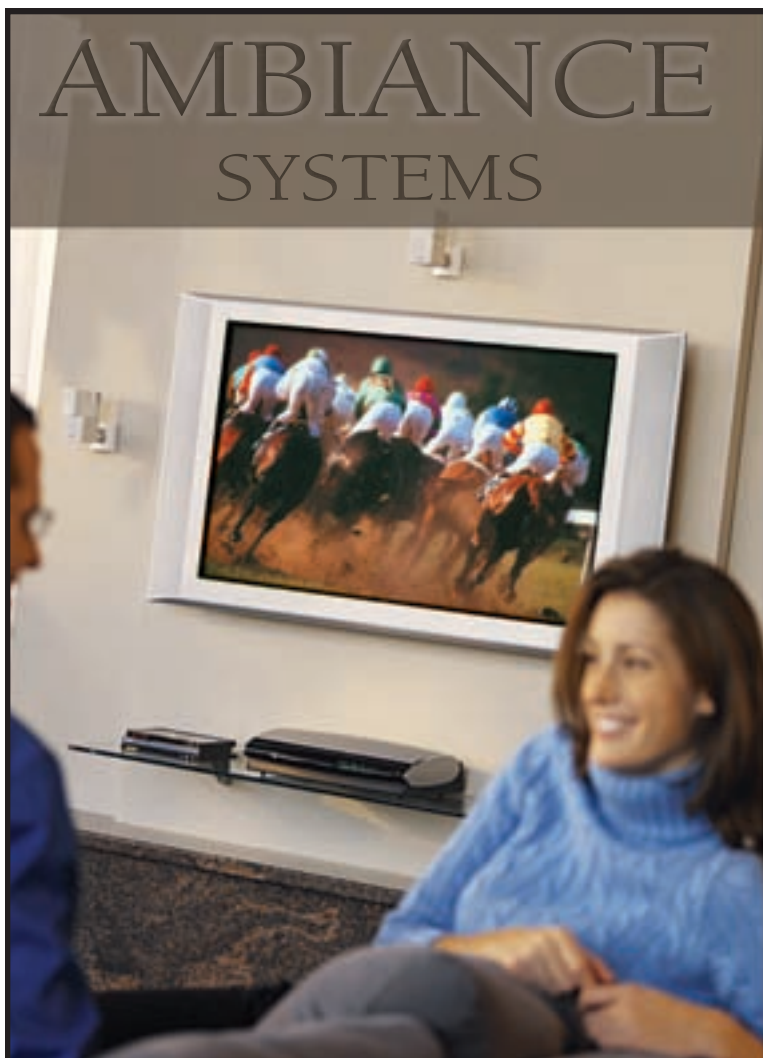
The Watson Farm will offer a Watercolor Workshop on Saturday, Sept. 15, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. A rain date is set for Sunday, Sept. 16.

Artists have enjoyed the scenic landscapes of the historic Watson Farm for over 100 years. Located in Jamestown, the farm offers panoramic vistas of the pastoral agricultural seaside landscape. This all-day workshop will enable participants to experience and capture the farm landscape and architecture through the medium of watercolor.

Artist Natalie Pfanstiehl, who has taught at the Newport Art Museum for nearly twenty years, will lead the workshop. Her work has been shown in national, regional and local juried shows and received numerous awards. She will give a one-hour demonstration of

landscape painting and spend the rest of the day assisting students with composition and painting techniques. Students should bring their own painting materials and a bag lunch. All levels of experience are welcome. The workshop is \$20 for Historic New England Garden & Landscape members, \$25 for Historic New England members and \$35 for non-members. To register and request more information, call Heather Minto at 423-0005.

The Watson Farm is a 280-acre working farm owned by Historic New England. Historic New England, is the oldest, largest, and most comprehensive regional preservation organization in the country. For more information, visit online at www.HistoricNewEngland.org.





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