

Worth the wait

Instant gratification, American way of life, bear downfalls



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Fast satisfaction.

That's what we all want, right? It almost seems like America has been built entirely so it's possible to gratify itself in full and immediate fashion.

Take fast food. Socially, that's how the rest of the world identifies us: a nation of fast-food addicts.

If they knew about the 10-minute wedding chapels in Vegas, they'd also assume we were addicted to fast love. (Let's try to keep those under wraps, all right?)

The ATM came about so none of us would ever get a fiscal urge that couldn't be taken care of. It's an ever-ready baby bottle for our wallets.

When we want a car stereo, we want to be able to drive the fastest route to Best Buy, grab the box of choice, and purchase it, interference-free, with a credit card. Then we zoom back out the automatic doors to hook the bad boy up.

Soon, our faces reveal the attainment of a secular nirvana as we enjoy the tunes thumping out of our purchases. Purrrrr.

It's the cycle of American life: Get an urge, fill it. Enjoy the temporary pleasure it provides. When we become bored with what we have, or it gets used up, identify the next urge. Fill it.

You remember the kind of things you were taught growing up, though, right? The sayings we heard in Sunday school (or if not there, elementary and high schools, and if not there sometimes on our old friend TV) taught us differently.

Money can't buy happiness. You would enjoy something a lot more if you worked for it. Patience is a virtue. All you need is love.

Those are clichés that crisscross our individual upbringings. You simply can't avoid them.

But do we really believe those things? I've never really heard anybody

stand up and vehemently disagree when he or she was told money wouldn't make him or her happy, or that the easy way isn't always the best way.

Were we sitting in silent agreement? Or were we all just too afraid to stand up and yell, "Yes it will, and yes it is!"

Our collective actions say that we think all those lovely clichés are bunk. We pursue money, avoid hard work, say to hell with patience and treat love like it's a secondary (or even inconsequential) goal.

And by no means can I sit on a throne and say, "Not me." I enjoy and utilize the comforts of American society as much as the next guy.

But I can say I know better, and that, at times, I'm sorry about it.

And that's not just because I was raised Christian — hearing over and over how true disciples abandon all their possessions and how big a bitch it is for a rich man to get into heaven. Those lessons stuck with me, but there's much more to life than them.

Most of us at are probably used to eating pretty much whenever we feel like it. We work at a job that, physically, isn't horribly demanding. We sit and lie down for hours upon hours each day.

I was lucky enough to grow up and work in a rural community, where for short periods you missed those little luxuries. (That's because of work — not because my family was destitute or anything.)

During those weeks of patrolling endless fields of soybeans in search of weeds to hack up with a machete, the little amenities were made worth a lot more.

First, you'd get into the fields about a half-hour before sunrise. If you haven't been in a bean field at that time ... don't go. The beans are dripping with dew, which means that inevitably within five minutes you are soaked from the crotch down (with dew, obviously). It's damn cold.

You've probably seen a movie where someone says, "I've never been so happy to see the sunrise!" Well, that thought went through your head every day in that bean field. The sun was your only hope of drying off and finally ending your shivers.

Of course, after working a half-day in the Nebraska summer sun, you're just as happy to find some shade and some food. Not good food, mind you — often sandwiches that are soaked with exploded Coke and missing the cheese

that one of your co-workers stole.

But you couldn't say that food didn't taste good to you at the time. And once you got home after a 10-hour day, you wouldn't trade a shower and a long sit on the couch for anything.

Normally, I wouldn't have even thought about those things. I would have taken them for granted and moved on to less basic desires — like which Nintendo game I would play.

You really do appreciate things more if you suffer for 'em a little. That's cliché, but it's true ... and in a way it's a shame that we tend not to truly understand that most of our lives.

So here are a couple of lines you can add to that "Everybody Should Wear Sunscreen" song — if you choose to call it a song (and as if that preachy guy hasn't become annoying enough already):

The convenience of American life is great. But every once in a while, deny yourself your most common desire until you feel you can't take it anymore. Do a menial task you wouldn't have to do. Stand out in the cold once in a while.

Once you finally go back inside or get that chocolate you've been craving, you might be glad you did.

Breakin' the law

Columnist offers advice to slide through run-ins with boys in blue



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The problem

Yo man! The man got you down? Like, has Johnny Law been givin' you the blues?

Well then listen up. And listen close now cuz I'm only gonna tell you this once.

There are a few things you can do to help keep the fuzz off your back.

Traffic stops

Have you ever been pulled over for speeding? If you have, then you know the drill.

The cop starts by asking you for your license, registration and proof of insurance. Then he or she asks if you know why they pulled you over.

If you're smart, as soon as the cop flips on the lights, you're reaching into the registration holder on the visor above you and grabbing the registration and insurance card. You pull over and get your driver's license out — fast.

Then you hold all three of those in your left hand, both hands on the steering wheel, where the cop can see them. Cops like to be able to see your hands. Don't disappoint them. You just make them edgy if you don't.

Remember, you want to be dealing with a cool, level-headed cop.

When the cop asks you if you know why you were stopped, say yes. Say you were going a little fast. Admit it. (It's true, right?)

If you act like you're clueless, that tells the cop that you weren't even aware you were speeding — a major strike against you if the cop was considering giving you a warning because you were considerate enough to have your hands on the wheel where they could be seen and your papers ready for inspection.

But hey — there's one other thing that will keep you from getting a ticket. Don't drive like an idiot.

Don't speed. Don't run red lights. Don't pass on the right, especially at those intersections where one lane becomes two for about a half-block before and after the intersection.

Try not to be an aggressive driver. I know we all get in a hurry sometimes, and we get frustrated when traffic slows down. But get this: Traffic isn't really slowing down any; you're just in an unreasonable hurry. Relax.

In short, don't create reasons to be stopped. That's a sure-fire way to not get a ticket.

Searches of your home

You all know the Fourth Amendment protects all of us from unreasonable searches and seizures. But some folks just can't seem to keep the cops from snooping through their personal belongings in their homes.

Maybe you've had the experience, maybe not.

One way this happens is when you live in an apartment building and smoke a little dope in your apartment now and then. One of your neighbors detects the rather distinguishable and pungent odor of burning marijuana and calls the cops. The cops show up, smell the dope and have probable cause for the search.

Maybe you're having a party. Let's say it's not even a big party. You've got a few of your friends over and the music turned up a little loud. A neighbor calls the cops.

The cops show up and knock on your door to tell you to turn the music down. When you open the door, the pungent aroma of that joint you smoked a half-hour ago is still lingering. The "plain smell" of the pot gives them, well, you know — probable cause.

Maybe when you open the door the cop sees everyone opening on beers, but half the people in the room look underage. Ever heard of search incident to arrest? Hmm.

There's a few things you can do to prevent this stuff from happening to you.

You can try stuffing towels under the doors, burning incense, or keeping the music down.

But here's a new idea — try not smoking dope and keeping underage drinkers out of your pad.

It works wonders, man.

Domestic disputes

It's really surprising the number of people who get arrested and carted off

to jail as a result of getting into fights with the people they live with.

Husbands beat on their wives, or vice versa, and someone calls the cops. In a lot of jurisdictions the law requires the cop to lodge someone who commits an act of domestic violence.

That could be a major hassle.

Well — unless you're a complete idiot you know the answer to this one.

Don't be a perpetrator of domestic

violence. 'Nuff said.

The solution

If the cops have been giving you headaches, don't worry, you're not alone. Lots of people have problems with the law.

There are people like you everywhere who ignore traffic laws and endanger the lives of everyone else. You're no different.

There's a hell of a lot of people who use illegal drugs and/or contribute to the delinquency of minors. You're indistinguishable.

There are hordes of people who go to jail for domestic violence and/or assault. Seems pretty normal, huh? Again, you're just one more unlucky soul who got caught.

Do I really need to tell you what to do?

