

Shower time now.

I've run every day this week so far. I really want to keep this up. Motivation is hard in my current state, but this is helping. I want to do this. I must do this.

“Mens sana in corpore sano” and all that.

Starting to warm up by then. Noticing how, just barely perceptibly, it gets easier, day by day.

Having time to register and really notice the snow-covered twigs on the trees, the patterns in the thin coverlet made by the grass and ground beneath. Feeling my feet slip then find traction on the slopes. Paying attention to how a lap and a half barely registers any more; I'm just starting to warm up by then. Noticing how, just barely perceptibly, it gets easier, day by day.

But running in winter in the snow is best of all.

The crunch of virgin powder under my running shoes. No mud, no puddles, just crisp whiteness spraying from my toes and back from my heels. At first, trackless white in front of me, then retracing my steps, watching for lap after lap as my pace stays much the same, my course unvarying, until I deviate a little to scale some berms or pound through the bark pits surrounding the children's toys. Watching as my pace shortens; time to stop. Sitting on an ice-cold bench, breathing deeply, getting my wind back for another couple of laps, feeling the wintry wind but not feeling the chill at all. Marvelling at the drugs and surgery and sheer luck that allow this. Enjoying the sensation of my legs working beneath me. Having time to register and really notice the snow-covered twigs on the trees, the patterns in the thin coverlet made by the grass and ground beneath. Feeling my feet slip then find traction on the slopes. Paying attention to how a lap and a half barely registers any more; I'm just starting to warm up by then. Noticing how, just barely perceptibly, it gets easier, day by day.

Running in winter is better still.

The cold wind in your face feels like a cool breeze; it's pleasant, even exhilarating. And the weak sun shines in your face and makes you feel truly alive. Perfect therapy for SAD.

Running in winter is better.

Running in winter is better.

It gets outdoors, in the fresh air, at a time of year when I don't spend much time outside. And you don't get so hot, of course – until you get inside.

Running is good.

28th January 2004

Liam Proven

“Liam Proven” on LJ

want to read it, but I did buy and sell a whole bunch of them.

respect for the Bible I never would have had otherwise. Didn't make me bibliophile, cringing in disbelief. Anyway, disbeliever or not, I gained a then bounce the thing in the air with an abandon that had me, a

between thumb and forefinger, pick up the Bible by that one corner,

weighed about 3 pounds, open it, grasp the top corner of one page

editions was to take a fairly hefty leather-bound copy, which must have

one of the ways he sold the more expensive ultra-thin India paper

the big Bible companies came in one day to demonstrate his wares and

(as well as that Lord Of The Rings boxed edition). The rep from one of

13th April 2004

Dave Bridges

Writing in [trufen]

cocooning oneself in cotton wool and trying to preserve yourself for

posterity.

have ridden a motorcycle, to top a quite long list. Life is for living, not

If I was bothered about not doing things that were bad for me, I'd never

park is a miracle. It's a wonderful feeling.

walking stick gives you the feeling that simply running around the local

Spending 3 months flat on your back, another month in a wheelchair or

on crutches, a few more months on crutches, and then 2½ years on a

biggie. I'm still here, it all works.

life anyway, and have done since 27th May ten years ago. Ain't no

I tolerate joint and bone pain on a pretty much daily basis most of my

locomotory organs.

possession of a more-or-less matched, more-or-less working *pair* of

and possibly knees too inside a decade. For now, I will revel in the

The fact that they work at all is a triumph. I'll need a replacement hip

mention? :-(

My knees are already slightly fucked. I got run over by a bus, did I

28th January 2004

My Knees Still Work

Liam Proven

Replying in the ensuing thread

Conversations 4

Fourth in thy name I go

Conversations compiled by Douglas Spencer

Issue 4 published 26th April 2004

Future issues published when I feel like it.

Available for the Usual.

Because you helped.

Because of your LOC.

Because you found it in the bar.

Because you sent me yours.

Because I rubbed your feet.

Because you can still walk.

Because I love you.

And, inevitably, online.

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conversations@dial.pipex.com
<http://efanzines.com/Conversations>

Dave says “But you are telling me that a normal British desktop printer is able to handle A3 paper? Get outa here!”
 Judith says “I tried your web site, but lack an A3 printer ...”

Cookery Section

17th April 2004

Douglas Spencer
 “dougs” on LJ

I came to the USA to see my girlfriend, Susan, for the first time in about four months. Naturally, I posted regularly to my pages on LiveJournal.com so that my friends on both sides of the Atlantic could keep up to date with how the trip was going. This was written on about day four of the trip.

It might seem that I'm writing a lot of cookery posts this week, when I might be engaged in other activities. Well, so I am. But it's worth pointing out how much the act of cooking for someone means to me. You see, it's a very symbolic act. The whole process of going shopping, choosing what to buy; bringing it home (yes, it does feel like home), cooking and serving it, the whole business of standing in the kitchen tinkering with food whilst the person I love looks on, it's immensely significant. It makes a huge difference to how I feel.

Competition winner for “Who said that?”

No one guessed the source of the quotation “I'm a ...” in issue 1, and when combined with the second “I went to ...” in issue 2 you did no better. However, when the third “A few moments ago ...” from the same source appeared, two of you spotted the source.

Mike Scott, emailing me from a distance of several yards while we were both at Novacon, writes “I suspect the quote on the back cover is from you yourself”, while Erika Maria Lacey actually pinpointed the source, writing “I keep telling people Google is your friend and nobody ever believes me”.

The LOC Box

Julia Daly

19th January 2004

I read your “Tell Me If I’m Odd” article with great interest. I have always had great difficulty in picturing people in my mind – a source of great irritation to my mother during my childhood. I couldn’t remember hair colour, eye colour, height, build – but I could always verbatim report out conversations. I often comment when talking to friends that this actor (actress or person I know) looks like that one, only to have them turn and give me a “you’ve suddenly grown six heads” style of glance. When I think hard about these things, what I’m actually seeing is not the features, but an expression or body language which strikes a chord with memories of another person. The appearance details of the person are not as relevant as the personality within, I guess.

I tend to look people straight in the eyes when I talk to them – yet I would have to think quite hard and then make a guess to tell you the colour of most of my friends’ eyes, unless we’ve had a conversation where for some reason they have stressed their colouring.

Dave Bridges

18th April 2004

Some things just are not important. You don’t have to know someone’s eye color or hair color or name in order to have a relationship with them. You just have to know who they are when you are with them. I’m not saying this does not lead to tremendous embarrassment at times, but it is my belief that an inability to remember names or describe the appearance of a loved one does not show a basic lack of attention, and is not the result of being entirely too self-centered; it’s simply that an occasional moment of embarrassment is a small price to pay for the immense savings that come from not having to train oneself to look for and remember a whole world of insignificant mind-clogging detail.

I also heard from James Bacon, Arthur D Hlavaty, Erika Maria Lacey, Joseph Nicholas, Lloyd Penney, Judith Proctor, Mike Scott, Pete Young

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The Foot Rub 15th April 2004

Douglas Spencer
“dougs” on LJ

There’s a pair of feet to which I’ve been giving foot rubs quite a bit recently, and the owner of these feet has asked me if I can instruct her boyfriend in the science and art of delivering the perfect foot rub.

This is difficult, because it really isn’t a matter of providing a succession of instructions along the lines of “rub in this spot, this hard, in this direction, for this long”. Instead, in order to deliver the perfect foot rub, there are three things to get right.

Firstly, and quite importantly, you have to understand what the problem is with the foot in question, what the foot rub is intended to achieve. So therefore you need to know why your subject asked for a foot rub, or you need to have observed the feet in action, or you need to ask how things are with the feet.

Secondly, and more importantly, you have to learn enough anatomy and physiology that you understand how a foot is constructed and can address the underlying causes of the problems described earlier. So therefore you might want to study feet in general, or perhaps put some serious time into familiarising yourself with the particular feet you’re most likely to be rubbing.

Thirdly, and more importantly still, you have to really want to do the foot rub well. You have to approach the foot rub with your whole attention, with your whole mind. If you’re fortunate enough to find yourself working on a foot that’s attached to the right person, you may find yourself in a position to approach the foot rub with your whole heart and soul too – and then results are typically excellent. But even if not, you still need to take the whole process seriously.

Finally, a brief word about technique. If you know what the foot rub is for, and you really understand what makes a foot work, and you approach the foot rub in the right frame of mind, then you are guaranteed to deliver a good foot rub and anything I could tell you about technique is completely superfluous. So this brief word about technique seems to have turned into no words at all.

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An Exercise In Letter Writing Erika Maria Lacey 9th February 2004 “owlrigh” on LJ

Dear Erika.

You are eleven years old. You know those dreams you have, of when you get to Australia and go to school and join up happily with those there? Reading those thin books of teenagerhood is all well and good, but do not mistake them for real life. You will not go to school and wear jeans and tennis shoes and fling your hair about as those books say. You will, in fact, be the same as you are now, only to them you will be different. You will have to wear a uniform and clunky leather shoes, but they will not be the same.

At first you will wear a green beret. The word beret is unfamiliar to you; soon enough it will not, be commonplace. You will have to wear a tie. Wearing one sounds strange now, I know. It won’t be so difficult to learn to wear one. You will get used to donning a white blouse, a long green skirt, and wrap that tie every morning.

One day you will go to a large second-hand store. Right now you despise knowing that everything you have is second-hand, or home-made, or somehow a hand-me-down. You dream of Australia where you will have something new. Those, dear heart, are dreams. You will, in time, become used to it. With time you will grow to cherish doing so, and come to adopt your mother’s thrifty view as your own.

Finding those school shoes will be a torment. You will go into a second-hand store bigger than any store you have previously seen and find shoes. As part of your uniform they will have to be black, sturdy, and closed-in. I am sorry, for you are used to sandals. From that day forth you will not be able to wear them. Instead you will have stiff leather shoes to pinch your feet. Every morning you will be pressed into holding a brush and polish and buff them to a shine. Their previous life will be visible on the scuffs on the toes and heel. Grow used to colouring them in with black marker on a regular basis. It is nothing to be ashamed of, not thrift nor poverty, despite the scorn you will face from those around you.

One day you will find school so stringent and students so unfriendly that you opt to run away rather than return for more. It will work, and the next school will be better. Things always get better.

Gone will be the green beret, the white home-made blouse you so despise as it looks nothing like the school’s official version, the long green skirt, those

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blocky black shoes. Gone will be the upper-class white scorn for the poor.

The next school will be golden t-shirts which resemble the school’s, but only the cheaper versions. Don’t worry. Everyone else will be doing the same. They too know the meaning of being poor.

You will wear a skirt. Not a long one, like you did before, but one short. It too will not be like that of your official school uniform. Do not worry. There are others who are doing the same.

There will be no hat, nor tie, nor black shoes. You will wear shoes soft, comfortable, lace-up and wave good-bye to the days of disguising shoe history or buffing them to a shine. Others will wear shoes the colour of the rainbow all over and none will look at you with a frown, for you will fit in.

Your skin colour will make no mark, nor your poverty be different, nor your background be overly strange, and there they will hold your hand and take you in and you will thrive instead of wilt.

Four years you will spend at that school, and throughout it there will be friendships and arguments and ties. It won’t be anything like you think of school now, but it’ll be reality and you will love it. At the very last they’ll ask people if they have anything to say, and you will stand up in front of your entire year level and say:

I came to Australia, and I knew no-one. I went to a school, and I hated it, and ran away. Then I came here. Some of you have hated me, and I you, and now we do not; you have shown me the best I could be and you have been a part of my life I never would have thought. I have learned more than I would have thought, and I will miss you. I thank you.

Then you will step down from that podium, in your borrowed dress and borrowed stole and ugly glasses and old, old shoes, amongst peers who, even though poor, are better dressed and yet you will not care and they will not care. They know. It will no longer matter.

Isn’t that better than what you would have ever thought? Dreams are dreams and in the end, reality takes it all. You will think more of them and more of the people who will live and thrive in memory even if time takes you different turns.

So don’t worry. It’ll work out in the end. It’s no comfort now. But it will be true, and always, always be true. Things aren’t what we want them to be now but they will be what we wanted in the end.

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