



Not living in the moment?

event of the year, I do not believe I exaggerate when I say I think almost two-thirds of the athletes, straggling along in an untidy march-past, had camcorders in operation. A good many, believe it or not, were actually on cell phones. Yikes!

Was this living the moment? And what a moment it was to be savoured. Years of hard work and discipline, thousands of dollars invested and spent to finally assemble before a national flag and proudly present oneself to the world. Instead the experience was, for some, limited to the detached confines of a camera lens. As a viewer I looked for and did not detect the sense of drama and pride in human achievement that normally brings unbidden tears to the eye.

To what extent are we choosing to let technology stunt our appreciation, if not very awareness, of what is going on around us? Is our capacity to live to the fullest being eroded? As Henry Miller so succinctly put it: "...who would be content with the counterfeit when the real is at everyone's beck and call?" Kerouac talks of the rare people who "...are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue center-light pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

Do we believe we have the time or the inclination to live the madness of the moment?

Tragedy, however, still seems to drive the moment home.

Millions quietly and deeply lived the sad passing of Princess Dianna. At the time nothing else seemed to matter. 9/11 was the same. I wept watching Willy Nelson and the star-studded crew that made up the *Tribute to Heroes* concert sing *America the Beautiful* (check out *YouTube*). In the words of Clint Eastwood, the long uninterrupted moment dwelt on "...a song that celebrates America and beckons us to what we can become..."

In our own lives we are understandably taken up with the pursuit of business goals, power, cash, status or whatever else we seek. It is perhaps helpful for us to consciously limit the intrusion of technology, or anything else, that would dilute our ability to savour the inherent truth, beauty and joy that each experience and encounter, however momentary, might bring along the way.

Real pleasure, consciously appreciated in the moment, is for me what living is all about.

Rodger Harding, a former lawyer and diplomat, is a business leadership and corporate intelligence awareness consultant. He may be reached by phone at (416) 962-6700 or by e-mail at staycool@web.ca.

Perhaps one of the most talked about concepts of our time is that of living in the moment. People clearly seem to intellectually appreciate the idea of savouring an instant in time, free of the burden of the past and the stress of the future.

Ironically, if this is so, I cannot wonder if the digital era has brought with it an unconscious and even negating desire ... to capture the moment, albeit it artificially, forever.

I remember being saddened at the Tour Eiffel, as the new millennium dawned, at how many of the thousands present were so preoccupied with recorders that they forgot to embrace and wish those around them well. Similarly, during a recent trip to Glacier Bay, surely one of the most splendid spots on the planet, rather than absorb the dramatic beauty around them, most were glued to camcorders throughout the day. I could not help but think back to the '60s and '70s when we laughed at tourists from certain technically-advanced nations, saying they would only *live* the experience when they got back home.

We, I am sure, all know the horrors of school sports meets, plays, graduations, etc. where proud parents almost on cue leap to their feet, cameras and phones waving in the air, digitally capturing little Johnny and Sarah for posterity. Too bad this practice precludes everyone present from sitting back and enjoying the actual proceedings.

My perplexity reached a new peak during the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. At what had to be the most publically and professionally recorded



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