

Estimation

I have always been concerned about using various techniques to keep my mind active. That activity is only one aspect of pursuing the primary purpose for living—experiencing one's limitless inner body possibilities and those within the out-of-body total environment.

Estimation is one constant mind-enhancing feature. From early childhood it is a factor in learning to walk, run and jump. An intuitive estimate of distance is significant in avoiding injury.

In this essay I will concentrate on estimation as a mind-enhancement topic, primarily during my adult life. When our family traveled about 2400 miles to Cleveland each summer for 35 years I did a lot of estimation plus encouraging Helen, Lisa and Carl to do likewise. We guessed at how far the next hill, mountain or other object was and made time estimates to our evening destinations. At times I stretched the role of estimation by creating a fictional story of a passing car's family's life style.

Estimation was a significant safety factor in almost 200,000 miles of travel without an accident. I maintained adequate distances from the car ahead while traveling at our normal speed of 70 miles per hour. I also mentally reinforced the idea of never swerving at high speed in order to avoid hitting an animal because of the consequence—a deadly rollover. I did hit small animals such as rabbits and squirrels. One time in New Mexico I killed at least one hundred tarantula spiders, during their annual mass migration. Only after slowing up to a near stop did I realize the numerous black spots on the highway were tarantula spiders.

While teaching, especially during my ten years at Sellwood School, estimation was frequently used in math and science. In math I encouraged students to estimate outcomes by guessing at the approximate answer in problems, before doing the math work. In science, estimating and predicting a possible outcome of any experiment was the usual preliminary process. I also encouraged students to question authorities in science.

My estimation skill was vindicated in the preliminary process while applying for a federal funding grant for the Metropolitan Learning Center. Before receiving the grant, our MLC formative committee had to get approval from the Portland School District, the state department of education and finally from the federal funding agency. The estimation process began. Without looking for financial [budgeting] assistance from authorities, I created the detailed budget for the proposal's three year funding of MLC. It totaled \$3,000,000. My estimated financial form included rental for classroom space at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and rooms in the basement of a nearby Methodist church. It also detailed funding for classroom furniture, students' (150) learning materials, three school buses, and the salaries for teachers, a director, a secretary, and a custodian. My wife Helen typed the proposal. It successfully passed the Portland School Auditor, the Oregon Department of Education, and finally, the US Department of Education.

Although approved throughout the educational bureaucracy, it didn't result in the opening of MLC. The [Oregon] state department had already used up the available federal funding for innovative schools for the approaching 1968-69 school year. MLC's five future teachers decided

they could not wait until the 1969-70 school year, so they decided to get the school district's approval to initiate a modified version of MLC. We began the 1968-69 school year within a section of Couch Elementary School, located in Northwest Portland. Three years later MLC took over the entire school.

After retiring in 1980 I again depended on my estimation skills while embarking on a totally new career—wood sculpting. I learned to use a chain saw and wood carving tools. My basic raw materials were pieces of tree trunks which I scrounged whenever a hardwood tree, such as a maple, was cut on the streets of Portland. When beginning to carve a dog, cat, or other animal, I had to estimate how far to cut with the chainsaw before using the hand tools. Within a year I had the audacity to tackle four huge, closely clustered maple trees in order to create three eighteen-foot nude females and one male. With a month of long daily hours of work, four beautiful figures emerged and remained posing for over 15 years before succumbing to an infection of termites. Numerous times I visited the forest-enshrouded home of my friend to marvel at my creation. Still, I wonder how that monument erupted out of the forest. It was my Rushmore achievement.

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