

Sample Document

With an elephant to ride upon—"with rings on her fingers and bells on her toes," she shall outdistance calamity anywhere she goes.

Speed is not in her mind inseparable from carpets. Locomotion arose in the shape of an elephant; she clambered up and chose laboriously. So far as magic carpets are concerned, she knows that although the semblance of speed may attach to scarecrows of aesthetic procedure, the substance of it is embodied in such of those tough-grained animals as have outstripped man's whim to suppose them ephemera, and have earned that fruit of their ability to endure blows which dubs them prosaic necessities—not curios.

You probably know the one about the two monks, but I'll tell it anyway. They were walking along one day when they came to a stream where a young lady was waiting, hoping that someone would help her across. Without hesitating, one of the monks picked her up and carried her across, putting her down safely on the other side. The two monks continued walking along, and after some time, the second one, unable to restrain himself, said to the first, "You know we're not allowed to touch women. Why did you carry that woman across the stream?" The first monk replied, "Put her down. I did two hours ago."

Once when several of us were driving up to Boston, we stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. There was a table near a corner window where we could all look out and see a pond. People were swimming and diving. There were

special arrangements for sliding into the water. Inside the restaurant was a juke box. Somebody put a dime in. I noticed that the music that came out accompanied the swimmers, though they didn't hear it.

One day when the windows were open, Christian Wolff played one of his pieces at the piano. Sounds of traffic, boat horns, were heard not only during the silences in the music, but, being louder, were more easily heard than the piano sounds themselves. Afterward, someone asked Christian Wolff to play the piece again with the windows closed. Christian Wolff said he'd be glad to, but that it wasn't really necessary, since the sounds of the environment were in no sense an interruption of those of the music.

One evening I was walking along Hollywood Boulevard, nothing much to do. I stopped and looked in the window of a stationery shop. A mechanized pen was suspended in space in such a way that, as a mechanized roll of paper passed by it, the pen went through the motions of the same penmanship exercises I had learned as a child in the third grade. Centrally placed in the window was an advertisement explaining the mechanical reasons for the perfection of the operation of the suspended mechanical pen. I was fascinated, for everything was going wrong. The pen was tearing the paper to shreds and splattering ink all over the window and on the advertisement, which, nevertheless, remained legible.

Good morning and welcome to Camp Achievement. I'm Anne Brand, founder and director. I'm sure you've got questions – you stand out when you ask a question! – but hold on to them for now. I have some things to say.

Some of you think this is going to be easy—just another executive retreat: a little R&R, a

good chance to sleep around. Wrong. This will be painful, rigorous, and difficult. Because at Camp Achievement, we test your will to achieve.

How? First: unfamiliar environment. Performance matters here, not history. You from Harvard? The deer don't care. Second: hard, unfamiliar tasks. We don't check your typing speed. We make you build a cabin out of grass. You don't just run a ropes course, you design it. Third: teamwork. You better decide that your ego takes a back seat to achievement. And finally: your own white-hot ambition to succeed.

That's right. Without that fiery ambition, we can do nothing. We provide a catalyst. You need to light the spark.

But you're successful already. You feel satisfied, right?

Wrong. I've talked to a lot of you one-on-one, and it's amazing how you all mentioned college. You were coated with gold. Captains of the football team, bestriding your campuses like colossi. The world belonged to you, and you were going to open it up and take it all.

But now, you said, you're just – OK. Your job is OK. The money's OK. You used to be great; now you're OK. You aren't a success, you're a survival. Your golden coating's gone, and you miss it more than anything in the world. And I bet late at night, when you think no one can hear, you point an imaginary gun at your head and say Pow! – and it feels good. Right?

Sure, you can keep living like this. You can die fifty years from now not having changed a thing. You can die irrelevant. Or you can make the first achievement of many to come and say, No. I want more. What's your choice?

Come on, people! Answer me! This is the easiest thing you'll do all weekend! Are you gonna give up? Are you gonna just survive?!