

Hello, I must be going. I cannot stay, I came to say I must be going. I'm glad I came but just the same I must be going...



Kathy Simons (2018 WTS-LA President), Photo © John Livzey, 2018

With all gratitude to Groucho and the Marx brothers for this wonderful lesson in life from *Animal Crackers*, they actually have a lot to teach us about life and goodbyes, not to mention truly insane dancing. But that lyric, “Hello, I must be going,” actually captures exactly what this feels like, this being president of WTS-LA. Though we’ve all accomplished so much and it’s been a very full two years, it feels like we just got started yesterday. And that leads me perfectly into what I want to talk about in this last missive.

Henry David Thoreau said, “The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.” Now on first read, well, yeah, duh. Who doesn’t get that? But, of course, there’s more to it than that. It’s older than the bible. *An eye for an eye* and *a tooth for a tooth* are expressions we’ve all grown up with. Also, when we’re considering a purchase or an investment, we’re trained to think, “What is the trade off?” or “I want the best bang for my buck!” We’re taught from an early age that much of life is transactional. And it is. That’s just reality. But, ah, there’s always a monkey wrench in the works. While much of life is, in fact, transactional, few people often precisely or profoundly examine all of the terms of the deal. Oh yeah, I hear you cry...

Okay, then consider this.

Think of the expressions, “No such thing as a free lunch,” or “You get what you pay for,” as the other end of the transactional spectrum. Right? But the reality is that they are true as well. When someone takes you to lunch or offers something to you for “free,” you are giving something of yourself, your time, your compassion, your attention, etc., in the deal. It isn’t free. More often than not, you must give of yourself in the deal, even if it’s just accepting the deal. There is a cost. And actually, there’s really more than one cost. There’s the opportunity cost.

Going to a “free” lunch means you are choosing that over a realm of other options, some of which could be lucrative in one way or another. Accepting a gift or a “free” service means that in all probability you will decline something else. This, too, is most definitely transactional. So, does that mean that everyone is out for themselves and that no one does anything without expecting something in return? Maybe. I think you can make a case either way. And I leave that for the philosophers. But in many ways, it doesn’t matter, as life tends to sell us short when it comes to absolutes. So, what is the value of all of this? Why do I go on?

There have been times when I have looked at my WTS-LA service and thought, “I’m sacrificing a lot in terms of my business and my family to help the chapter. It takes a lot of time and energy. And what am I really getting in return?” Is that a little selfish? Sure. It is. But I’d be lying if I said I never thought

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that. But the truth is that my experience as president *was* transactional—only I got much, much more than I first realized. And I think only the task of figuring out how to say goodbye made me realize the part of the deal that I had been overlooking.

Yes, serving as president has been an honor. And I wouldn't trade it for the world. But it has also enriched my life beyond my wildest dreams and expectations. In truth, being president has been the greatest blessing for me, both personally and professionally. Being WTS-LA president for the last two years has helped me grow in so many ways that I don't think I can fully comprehend it yet. I've had the incomparable opportunity to mentor and learn from some of the most talented and intriguing people I have ever met. I have been able to foster and nurture some wonderful relationships, people I would otherwise never have known. I have watched others grow, mature, and advance in ways that have brought me such gratification and joy. From both a business and personal perspective, being WTS-LA president brings you so much bang for your buck, that I think we might even be able to float an exchange rate with the dollar. So, here's what I want to leave you with.

First, thank you. Thank you to all of my WTS family for allowing me to work and learn with you in moving our mission forward. It's been a helluva ride and again, I wouldn't trade it in for anything. But I also want you to use my experience as a springboard. Thinking of serving as WTS-LA president? Joining a committee? Going to an event? Are you considering getting more involved in the chapter or your child's baseball team or a book club? Thinking about teaching yourself German or taking a class in auto mechanics? Have the bagpipes been calling to you from the old country? Do it. Please, commit and take action. Our transactional nature makes us weigh the pluses and minuses of everything. And again, that's only natural. Sadly, we often don't see the upside of the equation for the value it truly brings. But unless we properly gauge both sides of the equation, we could be cheating ourselves out of getting the value we deserve, value that will enrich your lives beyond expectation. So, again, do it.

The Buddha said, "The trouble is, you think you have time." Well, we all live on borrowed time and that may, in fact, be the rationale behind our transactional nature. So, please don't wait. Don't look only for obvious value. Look beyond tangible value for intangible benefit. When I view the WTS-LA presidency that way, I know I got the greatest bargain in the world. So, again, do it. And thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president. It's been an honor, a pleasure, an indelible experience, and a bargain.

And to finish Captain Spaulding's song: "I'll stay a week or two. I'll stay the summer through, but I am telling. I must be going..."