



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Henry Ford once said he didn't want executives who had to work all the time. He insisted that the man who was always in the fevered flurry of activity was not doing his best work. He added that he wanted executives to clear off their desks, prop their feet on it, and dream some fresh dreams.

His philosophy was only he who has the luxury of time can originate a creative thought.

This is an axiom. To be creative one has to deal directly with the problem, then retreat from it long enough to allow the yeasting of the mind to operate. In a quiet mood it breaks forth in splendor from its imprisonment.

Some people are adept at making on-the-spot decisions, but very few can be creative under imposed pressure. Creativity does not come by force-feeding, super-intensity, and lots of motion. Nor is it necessarily brought about by deadlines (Editors, take note!).

Creativity takes time. Occasionally I will find myself stomping around the house complaining about the lack of privacy that every writer needs to accomplish his work. My wife will reply by saying, "Well, you have 20 minutes before you have to leave for the airport, why not sit down at the typewriter and write." If she only knew that there are times I withdraw into my studio and sit for hours without ever touching the keys — just thinking and waiting for the ideas to break through.

The ideas that make most people famous are not original. The truth or insight really breaks upon them from the outside. (Even the thoughts in this column were stimulated by Henry Ford's idea.) Yet once the idea takes hold, it sets up chain reactions which are original until the creative person is almost seized by the entire concept. And there is nothing more powerful than an idea that takes control of a man.

Maybe we should listen to the wisdom of quietness if we are pressed by crowded social calendars, impossible timetables, overburdened appointment books or mountains of correspondence on our desks.

Yet, to find a place to be alone on this crowded planet is almost impossible. Cocktail parties may help a person kill time (that is, if time is so meaningless to him that it deserves killing), but crowded rooms seldom spawn great flashes of insight. These usually come in the alone hours sans ringing telephones and well-meaning friends.

It is reported that St. Francis said these words: "Human nature is like a pool of water, my Lord. Cast a stone therein, it goes rough and broken; stir it, it becomes foul; give it peace, let it rest, and it will reflect the face of the heavens which lie over it."