



# Gleanings

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## Did you know?

The word *terrorism* was first used in France to describe a new system of government adopted during the French Revolution (1789-1799). The *regime de la terreur* (Reign of Terror)

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*Encarta Encyclopedia*

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## Replace Fear and Terror With Faith

During the Vietnam War, Admiral Jim Stockdale was the highest-ranking United States military officer in the prisoner of war facility known as the Hanoi Hilton. During his eight year stay, he was tortured numerous times; nevertheless he courageously led his men and faithfully worked to thwart the ignoble efforts of his enemy.

Business researcher Jim Collins describes Admiral Stockdale's experience in the popular book **Good to Great**. The lesson learned from Admiral Stockdale's experience is referred to by Collins as The Stockdale Paradox. The Paradox, as articulated on page 86 of Collins' book, is expressed as follows: "Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and at the same time confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

Collins also asked Admiral Stockdale a penetrating question, "who didn't survive?". The Admiral's answer was "the optimists" (pg 85). The optimists set expectations of being released by certain dates. When reality did not

meet expectations, hope was lost and the optimists gave up and died. On the other hand, the Admiral sought to live in reality. Reality was very difficult and uncertain, but nothing could shake his faith that, in the end, he would prevail.

Today, we are facing fear and terror, not like the Admiral, but a very real fear and terror. The radical Muslim world has targeted the "infidels" in the United States and declared war. The reality of this volatile environment has thrown a weak economy into a tailspin over the past 18 months. How should we respond? Should fear and terror grip our hearts? Or should we learn from the Admiral? The brutal facts are that the economy is weak, the stock market is depressed, unemployment is high, the national debt is increasing, social security is under funded, and we are poised to go to war. Not a pretty picture, but it is the present reality. I think the Admiral would tell us to face reality and apply all available resources to respond, and never lose faith that we will prevail in the end. Isn't this a better attitude than fear and terror? Let's try faith.

## Strategic Life Alignment

The second page of this Newsletter presents an article on a fundamental question that we all must wrestle with—why am I here? This is a vexing question that has inspired song writers, philosophers and theologians for centuries. Much has been written and said, but in the end, every human being, who is honest and faces reality, must answer this question.

To help you address this question, I have developed a seminar titled "Strategic Life Alignment". In this seminar, I take participants through a series of exercises designed to stimulate thinking about who they are and why they are here. The answer to the why question

starts with the who question. The premise of the seminar is that maximum satisfaction and success in life comes when one adroitly answers the who and why questions.

The seminar is fun, interactive, and thought provoking. If you have not been through an exercise like this, please consider attending. Investing one day to better understand why you are alive can do nothing but bless you.

This seminar will be offered on Thursday March 13th. Please go to the web site [www.StrategiesWork.com](http://www.StrategiesWork.com) for details and to register.

## Living Beyond Our Work

At some point in our lives, we all need to ask the question, "Why am I here?" It is a challenging question that is difficult to answer. The easy route is to not answer it. My defense mechanism to avoid answering the question is to stay busy and the question never enters my mind. However, despite my efforts of denial, occasionally during some infrequent down time, the question resurfaces and demands an answer.

Am I here to simply be identified with my work? If you read the daily obituaries, you might believe that is the case. Consistently, you will find the deceased identified with his or her work. He or she was a doctor, salesperson, executive, construction work, lawyer, teacher, homemaker, nurse, etc. Is there a purpose beyond what he or she does?

It is interesting to note that multi-generational organizations tend to have a purpose beyond what they are currently doing. IBM started making typewriters then moved into computers and now offers computer services. How did this happen? IBM had vision beyond the products and services that it offered at any point in time. IBM sought to be responsive to customers with excellent products and services. Hence, no matter what product or service IBM offers, its purpose is the same.

Well you say, this is great for a company, but what about individuals? Are we to have an individual purpose that is beyond what we are currently doing? Why not? Are you limited to what you are currently doing? Is there only one venue where your essential nature can be expressed? My long time friend, Wayne Reiter, started as a cost accountant, became a controller, then president of a company, and now is a forensic accountant. So why is Wayne here? In all of Wayne's work, what I have seen is his ability to face the truth, no matter how challenging. Wayne is a black and white truth seeker. More than anything else, this is who Wayne is and why he is here. Or take me. I have been a research scientist, the president of a family business, and a consultant. In all of these opportunities, the key word for me is valued added change. I am an agent of change and growth. At the very core of my being, this is what I am and what I do best no matter what the venue.

So who are you? Why are you here? What are you supposed to be doing? What is the common thread in everything that you have done? Challenging questions that demand an answer.



### Your comments and questions are invited!!!



Serving clients by providing business and financial advisory services with wisdom, skill, and integrity.

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Since 1987, Dr. Gerald R. Chester has been providing business and financial advisory services to clients. After receiving his Ph.D. in physics, Gerald moved quickly from the research lab into management. From 1978 to 1985, he managed his family's business, which prospered while growing at an average annual rate of 20%. As a business and financial advisor, Gerald utilizes his rigorous technical education and hands-on management experience to serve his many clients with seasoned balanced judgment. His clients recognize and value his expertise in both business and financial matters. Gerald's focus includes strategic planning, business analysis, business valuations, business plans, mergers and acquisitions, financial planning, investment strategies, investments, and personnel assessments. The Newsletter, *Gleanings*, is intended to provide a venue to share the insight and wisdom gained over the years working with dozens of organizations.

Gerald is a registered investment advisor.