

WORDS HOLD REMARKABLE POWER

"I am but an ordinary Man. The Times alone have destined me to Fame--and even these have not been able to give me, much...Yet some great Events, some cutting Expressions, some mean Hypocrisies, have at Times, thrown this Assemblage of Sloth, Sleep, and littleness into Rage a little like a Lion."

John Adams, the inveterate diarist soon to become our second president, penned this two-sided description of himself in 1779.

Bland in comparison to Adams' writing, the bulk of my 30 years of sporadic journal entries lack sufficient sparkle to even lift themselves from the mundane: "Went to church." Others memorialize comic absurdity. "Brudderman is ripping at the rug as if he still had claws."

And much more rarely, significant emotion springs to life. "In yesterday's early morning hours, an unexpected guest took us by surprise by quickly and quietly snatching away the precious daughter entrusted to us, to have and to hold, to guard and to protect, for almost 23 years. And in that single moment of visitation, Death changed our lives forever."

Sparse though it be, my journal is the pen and ink ledger of how I have spent the days allotted me. Life and death, joy and sorry, forgiveness and bitterness, hope and despair--all are buried among words often jotted in spasms of duty.

A journal is a melting pot where disjointed thoughts may simmer until extracted and hammered into a strong and useful shape on the anvil of retrospect. The eye of experience, blind to grammar, spelling and punctuation, discerns the potential in the words.

Though never approaching Adams' color, flair or intensity, my journal notations often illustrate a point he made to his distinguished son, John Quincy, that a diary "helps you focus in your life. It is the act of writing that causes the brain to come into focus and have insights you wouldn't have otherwise." Writing crystallizes and precipitates fuzzy thinking.

My journal chronicles the birth of dreams, hopes and aspirations, more often to death than to fulfillment. Occasionally, however, wandering tracks across the years magically converge on a path going somewhere in particular. When our son left home, for example, I handed him 50 typed pages of my journalized aspirations--with prayers that he would live up to them.

Written words have the remarkable ability to reach beyond the grave.

In his article "Writing Down Our Thoughts,"our friend Jim Elliff states, "We leave our thoughts to future generations when normally the preponderance of them, if not every last one of them, would have vaporized upon our death or mental decline."

In the halls of eternity, another journal resides, awaiting notations.

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name."

But in this life, our words, and the persons they represent, must be captured before time snatches the pen from our hands.