



Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

## **Navigating Life With Your Dreams**

Waitin' on the Train

His back was turned against the cold North wind on a February Morning in 1957. The boy was a shivering eight-year-old standing beside the Santa Fe railroad tracks running East and West along Highway 60. He wore a plaid coat with a turned-up lamb's wool collar. When asked about the coat, he would say "My mama sewed it for me."

A New York Yankee baseball cap his father bought at the M.E. Moses Five and Dime was all he wore to protect his head from the freezing air. He clutched a brown paper bag under his left arm and held a burlap feed sack with two shirts, a pair of homemade denim pants and a Cowboy Bob toothbrush in his hand. The sack rested on the ground near his boot. By all appearance, he was leaving home.

His dreams went into motion when the Santa Fe Chief Passenger train roar by. It was massive and powerful with a sleek silver skin. His fascination was the ninth car. It had a blue glass observation dome on top. He longed to be in it. He thought, "Rich people must sit in there and watch the world go by." The boy dreamed he could see mountains, giant trees, the ocean and all the stars when the sun went down. Dreams activated each time the train passed.

The old man spotted his grandson standing by the tracks and wondered why he was there on such a wintry morning. "Granddaddy" was small in stature, slightly stooped, and warmed by an old Navy P Coat. Tuberculosis kept him from serving in World War II, but he was proud of the coat he purchased at the Army Navy Store in the big town seven miles East. He approached and his mustache and browned teeth showed through his freezing breath. He was worn by the years, but wise and worldly.

He asked, "What cha doin'?"

"Waiting on the Train Granddaddy."

"Do you know where you're goin'?" Granddaddy asked. "No" was the reply.

"Do you know what time the Chief will be here to take you on the ride?"

"I don't know", he said.

They walked hand in hand to the yellow Train Depot just 50 yards Westward along the tracks. The wall held a chalkboard sign with the words...

Departures  
East bound – Tulsa 7:43 AM  
West bound - Albuquerque: 3:19 PM

The Grandfather took a silver and gold watch from his overalls pocket, knelt down beside his grandson and opened the watch. He said "Look at the time. You missed the Tulsa train, and it will be 5 hours before you can board for Albuquerque. Don't waste your time waiting. Maybe I can help you choose the best way to go."

They sat together on the cold iron track where the West Bound train would pass. The Granddaddy said, "Look down the track and tell me what you see." The 8-year-old saw tracks, wide at first, but very narrow just before they disappeared over the horizon.

The grandfather told him that like the tracks that disappear on the horizon, his dreams would also disappear if he didn't have a purpose for his waiting. He told him that "today is the time to plan for his dreams." He said, "Plan today for your travel tomorrow."

So, now I ask you, "Are you waiting on a train you believe destined to an unwritten book, more education, a grandiose vacation, or a perfect job?" The Granddaddy's lessons may apply to you the same as they did for his grandson, over sixty years ago.

If you must wait, wait actively. Don't be misled by the solid feel of the tracks if you don't know where they will take you. The rock-hard feel keeps you from actively seeking tools to succeed and make your hopes and dreams reality. Remember, the best use of today is planning for tomorrow. Plan to set your dreams in concrete and build the tracks to get you to your goals.

I ask you today, "Is your train going where you want to go? Or are you waiting for a job or a book, or a new home to be dropped at your feet as the Santa Fe Chief whizzes by?"

A valuable life lesson was learned that February morning. If I wanted to see the world from the Blue Glass Dome atop the Santa Fe Chief, I had to take action. As my grandfather and I walked away from the depot, he removed this silver and gold watch, placed it in my hand, and said, "I give you this tool to help you know when the train will depart. It is only one of many tools you will need; the rest are up to you."

The watch rests in my upper left desk drawer, and each time I look at it, I remember that I must wait with a purpose. I must gather the tools to plan and work for success. If I'm waiting on a train, it has to be going where I'm going. Do yourself a favor, determine your destination, gather the tools to make hopes and dreams that make your eyes shine a reality, and buy the ticket.

Enjoy the ride. Peace always

*This was a speech I wrote for a Toastmasters International Speech Contest in 1997 (over 60 years read "over 40" in '97). My mind just didn't want to write from scratch, so I went to my speech file and found "waitin' on the train". It won twice, and I pray it will in some way benefit you as you read it.*

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