

# Replay of old favorite: 'The Station'

**Dear Readers:** One of the most frequently requested essays since I have been writing this column is "The Station" by Robert Hastings. That talented writer died recently, but his work will be read and appreciated for many years. What follows will be familiar to many of you. I believe it was his best.

## The Station by Robert J. Hastings

Tucked away in our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision in which we see ourselves on a long journey that spans an entire continent. We're traveling by train, and from the windows, we drink in the passing scenes of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at crossings, of cattle grazing in distant pastures, of smoke pouring from power plants, of row upon row of cotton and corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our minds is our final destination — for at a certain hour and on a given day, our train will finally pull into the station with bells ringing, flags waving and bands playing. And once that day comes, so many wonderful dreams will come true.



Ann Landers

So restlessly, we pace the aisles and count the miles, peering ahead, waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"Yes, when we reach the station, that will be it!" we promise ourselves. "When we're 18 . . . win that promotion . . . put the last kid through college . . . buy that 450 SL Mercedes-Benz . . . pay off the mortgage . . . have a nest egg for retirement."

From that day on, we will all live happily ever after.

Sooner or later, however, we must realize there is no station in this life, no one earthly place to arrive at once and for all. The journey is the joy. The station is an illusion — it constantly out-distances us. Yesterday's a memory; tomorrow's a dream. Yesterday belongs to history; tomorrow

belongs to God. Yesterday's a fading sunset; tomorrow's a faint sunrise. Only today is there light enough to love and live.

So, gently close the door on yesterday and throw the key away. It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad, but rather the regret over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, swim more rivers, climb more mountains, kiss more babies, count more stars. Laugh more and cry less. Go barefoot more often. Eat more ice cream. Ride more merry-go-rounds. Watch more sunsets. Life must be lived as we go along.

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*Followup column  
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# Old favorite: Don't wait to get to 'The Station' to enjoy life

**Dear Readers:** Here is another reprint of one of your most-saved columns. I hope this one is as special to you as it was to me.

**Dear Ann:** Back in December 1987, I wrote to you and said I had seen "The Station" in your column shortly after my wife had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. I thought of all the dreams we had and the promises I made. One of those dreams was to go to Paris. With her doctor's permission, I took my wife to Europe, and we had the most beautiful vacation of our 43 years. She passed away 18 months later.

When my letter appeared in your column, I received phone calls and letters from across the country. I heard from long-lost friends and relatives, and even total strangers, who told me how much that column meant to them. I wrote again to thank you, and you printed that letter, too. The day it appeared, I was overwhelmed with calls, and received letters from as far away as Alaska and Germany.

Several people on Long Island wrote, and said if I were ever in their area, to come by for a chat. I thought, "Why not?" I contacted one of the ladies, and we met for coffee at a diner.

Viola and I have been together now for 10 years. I thank you, Ann, and the late Robert Hastings, whose family sent me a beautiful letter, for changing my life.

— *Irv Gaipman, Margate, Fla.*



**Ann Landers**

## The Station

*Robert J. Hastings*

Tucked away in our subconscious is an idyllic vision. We see ourselves on a long trip that spans the continent. We are traveling by train. Out the windows we drink in the passing scene of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at a crossing, of cattle grazing on a distant hillside, of smoke pouring from a power plant, of row upon row of corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of mountains and rolling hillsides, of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination. On a certain day, at a certain hour we will pull into the station. Bands will be playing and flags waving. Once we get there so many wonderful dreams will come true, and the pieces of our lives will fit together like a completed jigsaw puzzle. How restlessly we pace the aisles, damning the minutes for loitering — waiting, waiting, waiting for the station.

"When we reach the station, that will be it!" we cry. "When I'm 18." "When I buy a new 450SL Mercedes Benz!" "When I put the last kid through college." "When I have paid off the mortgage!" "When I get a promotion." "When I reach the age of retirement, I shall live happily ever after!"

Sooner or later we must realize there is no station, no one place to arrive at once and for all. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad. It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today.

So, stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.

— *Ann Landers is a columnist for Creators Syndicate; her column appears every day. Letters should be addressed to Ann Landers, P.O. Box 11562, Chicago, IL 60611-0562. For a personal reply, enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.*