

The Old Man and the Parking Garage

On Thursday afternoon I pulled into a parking garage and promptly left when I realized the advertised “free” garage really wasn’t free, and I didn’t see an open space. As I handed my ticket to the man at the booth, I told him I had just gotten there, and I asked him whether or not I owed anything. “I don’t think so,” he said, “but I have to run your ticket through this thing before I can find out.” I waited as he grumbled, scanning the ticket over and over, apparently unable to do what he needed to do to open the gate. Finally, everything came together, the digital payment meter blinked \$0.00, and he complained, “This is why I hate computers.” I smiled, ignored likely user error, and, in an effort to make him feel better, said, “Computers are wonderful when they work, but when they don’t, they sure can make life difficult, can’t they?” He smiled back, and we wished each other a good day.

You’re probably wondering what that story has to do with blogs filled with acronyms such as SOIL, PTE, CAPATEC, and SENACYT or what a lonely man in a cold garage has to do with focusing on Next Practices and changing the world. And the answer is that this parking garage moment in my life offers a clear opportunity for juxtaposition: An older man, longing for the past and fearing the future versus the leadership at iCarnegie, embracing change, creating the future, and learning from the past rather than clinging to it. There’s no judgment in my story, just thoughtful observation. As I read through the bios of your leadership team, I was impressed by your resumes, but even more impressed with the fact that each and every one of you has done what many struggle to do: You’ve stayed ahead of the game as resourceful educators and successful business people, while never losing your childlike wonder or forgetting about the joy of discovery, whether you’re petting (defanged?) cobras or receiving a “get out of jail free” card from a student who was dumped because she was home with Norovirus when her boyfriend wanted her to be at an important fraternity function (that may or may not have involved copious amounts of vodka and Kool-Aid). And what’s even more exciting to me is that you know you will change the world – and, it seems, you know just how to do it.

I don’t like winter. Waking in the dark makes me wish I were a grizzly, hibernating the long nights away. And I tend toward being a night person, so, as you might imagine, waking for the day at 5:30am three short days before the winter solstice is something I actively avoid. Yet this morning, I awoke early, started thinking about how I might, as Gandhi suggested, be the change I wish to see in the world and how I could make a living while making the world a better place. My musings led me to my laptop and to Monster.com, where I found an advertised opening for a writer at iCarnegie. This in turn led me to your blog. And three hours later, I am still entranced. Your words were able to not only keep me awake, but also to enliven my spirit, refresh my mood, and spark a stream of seemingly-endless ideas well into daylight. I can’t get enough of the blogs or the hope they inspire. In one you mention vocations, so I thought I’d share mine. I consider myself a writer, a photographer, an advocate, a dreamer, a “doer”, and an agent for change. Education is a passion, and empowering people to learn how to learn (rather than simply memorizing and regurgitating) and to leverage their strengths to mold their futures excites me like little else.

While exploring your blogs and web site content, I felt like I had happened upon a group of people who share my passion, my vision, and my goals. To be a part of your team would help me realize my dream of making a real difference, of being part of something so much greater than myself and being paid to do it. Maslow upside down? I’d say yes!

Although I was hoping to find my calling in a warmer climate, I clicked on the link to read more because I was born in Pittsburgh, and I’ve always felt affection for The Steel City. My mom used to joke that she hoped I’d marry a Mellon so my name would be Helen Mellon (and, the family money wouldn’t hurt either). The nickname Helen Mellon stuck, and later became Helen Mellon from Glen Ellyn—a moniker my high school friends

youthfully altered and relish to this day. So, it seems, Pittsburgh and iCarnegie is a natural, fitting place for me to continue my writing career. After twelve years of writing professionally, I still love it. Weaving a story, engaging learners, sharing knowledge – these things make working fun, and I would welcome the chance to talk with you about how I could put my experience writing for e-learning platforms to work for you, share with you my thoughts about the future of education, and discuss how hiring me will help you make iCarnegie a household name—both in the United States and across the globe. I’m looking forward to that conversation, and I hope you are as well. Should you like to get in touch with me, you can find me via email at Helen@mallorn.com or by phone at 630-615-1567 or 217-419-5447. And if you’re interested in reading my attempts to teach grammar with a (hopefully) humorous spin, feel free to check out the beginnings of my grammar blog at <http://melovegrammar.blogspot.com>.

Thank you for taking time to read my story, inspiring me, and making my morning that much better.

Helen (a.k.a. Helen Mellon from Glen Ellyn)