



Pardon my French!

The other day, I was trying to explain one of my ideas to Sadako, and in an attempt to try and make my thoughts more clear to her, I got out a sheet of paper, and drew a diagram. I put a timeline on the paper, crossed it with a series of dashes to indicate months, and then, as I talked, added some lines and numbers here and there to help illustrate my point.

Unfortunately, none of this helped at all. I had miscalculated the length of the line and it became all scrunched up at one end; I forgot to include a few months on one of the years, and by the time I had made a few more scribbled notes on the sheet, it became apparent that it just wasn't working. What had been intended to be a clear depiction of my thoughts had turned into an incomprehensible mess, and I gave up in disgust.

I should have known better than to even start such a thing in the first place. I seem to be constitutionally incapable of making legible notes of any kind, either jotted words, or diagrams. I want to make a neat and orderly expression of my thoughts, but it never seems to come out that way. On my desk at home I always keep a running 'to do' list, replacing it every few days as the sheet becomes filled with crossed off items, but each time I do, I always find that I am unable to understand one or another of the items on it. What does that say? I have no idea ...

Back in school days, my notebooks were an absolute disaster. I would start each year in September with pristine fresh notebooks and binders, along with a firm resolution to keep things 'neat and tidy', but no more than a few weeks would pass before everything would decay into chaos. I still retain one vivid memory of a French teacher in high school who called us up to her desk one by one so that she could inspect our notebooks. When she saw mine, she lost her temper and threw my entire binder across the front of the classroom in disgust. Perhaps Sadako has the same feeling these days when she sees my desk!

One possible explanation for this might be my left-handedness. Back in those days we were using pen and ink, and that is a nightmare for a lefty, with one's hand immediately smearing everything you write. By the time ball-point pens came along, perhaps my bad habits had already been set ...

Thinking about this honestly though, I guess I have to admit that my inability to make clear notes is more a reflection of my inability to have clear *thoughts*. I have no shortage of ideas, or of things to say, but they seem to be in such a jumble in my head that it is no surprise really that I am unable to put them down on paper clearly.

What saves me from total chaos? My computer! I keep a list of ideas for 'A Story A Week', and because it is typed I am able to read it! My bookkeeping, my business records, names, addresses, phone numbers ... all are safely stored on this computer of mine, in perfectly legible form, and carefully backed up for safety. Without this wonderful machine, I would have nothing more than a

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series of scrawled scribbles on mounds of scraps of paper scattered all around the room. My business would be at a standstill, my work output reduced to a trickle, and my communication with others negligible.

These days, we commonly hear from people who bemoan that computers are leaving our young people with a reduced ability to write, to read, or to think for themselves.

I'm living proof that it 'ain't necessarily so'! Three cheers for Apple!

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