

## THINGS I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYMORE

When our son was small, my wife often offered him a choice for lunch: three beet slices or four. Always picking the three, he finally asked Mom why she didn't eat beets. Her answer was as simple as profound: "I ate my full quota of beets as a child and don't have to eat them anymore."

Likewise, on an insightful February morning, I realized that I had unknowingly fulfilled a quota of my own.

Characteristic of my routine, I had spread all the paperwork pertinent to income tax preparation on the kitchen table. Then more subtle than intrusive, one thought gained instant dominance over his fellows: I don't want to do my own taxes anymore.

This revelation instantly altered my decades-old procedure. Stuffing all the papers into an envelope, I hustled them to an accountant. Did he save me any money? Maybe. Did he rescue me from immense frustration and tedium? Definitely.

In a peculiar sort of way, I had actually enjoyed the annual ritual. Pulling together the pieces, filling in the forms, dotting I's and crossing T's had imparted the pleasure in a job well done.

But my TIDWTDA (Things I Don't Want To Do Anymore) list contains more than income taxes. Double-edged, I once enjoyed some activities but have now lost the taste for them.

I recall, for example, the satisfaction of spending a productive hour draining old oil, spinning on a new filter, and filling the car with fresh oil. Now the friendly folk at Mr. Quick Lube do the job in 10 minutes--plus give me an ice cream bar and cup of coffee.

House painting has been on the TIDWTDA list for at least 20 years. And when we moved a year ago, "maintenance free" was a prerequisite.

Several casualties of the TIDWTDA list ended up at Goodwill last week. Off went the drafting instruments I used to create intricate charts and graphs in my early days of writing for technical magazines. But even if my eyes would still cooperate, the desire lingers not. Same thing with tinkering with electronic gadgets and circuitry. A younger enthusiast might actually appreciate a big box of ancient electronic components.

But I dare not erase the TIDWTDA completely. Trips to the fitness center, for one. The rigor of regular exercise helps forestall the relentless assault of aging.

Same thing with learning. It would be easier to abandon reading my Bible, studying and teaching, but atrophy would quickly disable remaining brain cells.

Often deferred indefinitely, preparations for departing this life (from updating wills to assessing spiritual readiness to mending broken relationships) mustn't be ignored. In other words, am I ready to go--today?

My TIDWTDA list grows year by year. The difficulty is not in recognizing what I'd rather not do just now, but in how to properly handle each point. Failure to separate responsibility from apathy opens the door for a benign difficulty to change overnight into a cancerous liability.