

COMMENTARY

A time for everything

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Isn't it all a matter of timing?

Your dad and mom had the right timing to make you, whatever else happened before or after that. Just check your pulse and you'll know I'm right. So timing, as 2.2315 million people have said, is everything.

Not only in new "phase III" water restrictions in Lee County, to be enforced beginning this week, but in everything else, apparently.

When you Google "timing," the first three entries come up like this, or at least they did at the beginning of the week:

1. "The World Clock shows current local time in cities and countries." (That's good. The world clock will tell you when you can water in Lee County.)

2. "Timing is everything: discover how the right timing and NITRO-TECHs muscle building power can help you achieve your fitness goals!" (That's bad. If you work out too much, and you use those big muscles a lot, you'll have to drink more water. Maybe you should reconsider.)

3. "FINISH RIGHT TIMING ... We are a full race scoring and timing company. We can time and score any size event you may have." (This is very good, if you like to keep track of how fast you are. When you run swiftly away from the water police, this company can time you in the 100 meter dash, the 200, the 400, the 800, the 1500, the 3K, the

10K and the marathon.)

The Google stuff is all very nice, but strangely, there is no mention at the top of the Google listings that describes the most important thing: how timing might save you either thousands of dollars if you live in Lee County, or perhaps death by dehydration.

Perhaps that's a slight exaggeration. But the fact is, water is tight. Too tight. Like somebody once said just before the bit hit the fan, "It's awfully quiet out there. Too quiet."

First, a comment about the water police: You can bet they're on patrol, now. So here's the word. Call 274-2547 for what the new water restrictions mean to you, or go on-line at www.lee-county.com, and click on "Phase III restrictions," in the left-hand bar.

But don't worry. The South Florida Water Management District, which establishes these water restrictions, is not very serious about them, and neither is Lee County.

For example, you can wash your car anytime you want, for as long as you want, as long as you have a shut-off nozzle on the end of your hose, and the car is parked on grass or gravel, so the water runs back into the soil, according to the woman who answers the phone at the telephone number above.

What does that mean? It means that if you want to ignore the restrictions, just park a car somewhere in the general vicinity, and start spraying in its direction, which you will locate eventually and perhaps precisely somewhere on a 360-degree compass, after you have watered about 355 other degrees, where the car is not located. What does this mean? It means that as far as the SFWMD or the county government is concerned,

number one: Cars are more important than anything else, and they should be watered regularly; and number two: You can water all day, right through the middle of the day when vast tonnages of water evaporate, any time you wish, as long as you appear to be watering...that's right...your car.

Don't water the flowers, the vegetables or the grass, okay? But feel free to water your car. Put a little gravel under it, and stick it in front of the lawn.

Golf course owners and people who plant new sod (developers) and owners of properties of 5 acres or more — rich folks, in other words — all of them have more flexible guidelines than everybody else. Not just farmers, who probably need to be unrestricted — actual farmers who grow food, I mean, not people pretending to be farmers so they can get agricultural exemptions and water more, which is about 95 percent of those who claim to be farmers in Lee County, in my estimation.

But never mind the double standards. The basic idea for most property owners (under 5 acres) is that you can water once a week, for four hours, either in the morning or the late afternoon. But not between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Which day you can water depends on the last number of your address — not on your race, your religion or your sex, so keep in mind that it's constitutional.

The basic idea — quit wasting water — is probably sound, not that officials feel too pressed about this. But what I want to know, is this: Why are there so many people, some private citizens, and some who own businesses hereabouts, who haven't figured out how to use the timers on their sprinkler systems?

Sometimes those sprinkler-system snafus happen in the brain. I've seen two people just this week watering plants or grass or both with garden hoses in the middle of the day, which is precisely the time when water

is least valuable, since it evaporates most quickly under the midday to afternoon sun. (By the way, they weren't old. Old people tend to understand restrictions, and do them without much complaint, like they had to in the Depression, or the big war, or some other time.)

And unless I'm wrong, and I'm never wrong (that's a line from a movie, *The Princess Bride*), I've seen corporate sprinklers banging away at our water supply too, right in the middle of the day, like little terrorists. Especially in gated communities where they water their own lakes with fountains, or they water the medians in their roadways.

But how much does greening the grass at corporate headquarters or on the median contribute to harvesting the American greenback? None at all. And if it does, why not just spray paint the sucker or put down astro-turf?

But whatever you do, quit using the water unnecessarily, and especially at inappropriate times, okay?

Because timing is everything.

After all, "Timing and arrogance are decisive factors in the successful use of talent," said Marya Mannes.

"The essence of football was blocking, tackling, and execution based on timing, rhythm and deception," said Knute Rockne.

"Timing in life is everything," said Leonard Maltin.

"All things entail rising and falling timing. You must be able to discern this," said Miyamoto Musashi.

"Observe due measure, for right timing is, in all things, the most important factor," said Hesiod.

And finally, somebody who tells it straight, kid. From Raymond Chandler: "All right, look. If you absolutely have to tell (the water police) the truth, at least wait until the timing's right. And that's what deathbeds are for." ■

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