

When considering 'good luck', it would serve us well to keep things in perspective. The true miracle is that any of us are here at all. The odds are astronomical against us. The fact that every single one of our numbers is leading back to the dawn of life on earth, and to survive long enough to reproduce, is a miracle beyond the ability of any of us to fully comprehend.



The Mechanics of Luck

We are not born into this world controlling it; rather we start out in life, completely at its mercy. One of the first habits we all develop, from an early age, is the art of 'noticing'. We are constantly noticing our environment, and this is a vital part of our survival. Noticing our surroundings and having a awareness of how events unfold around us is crucial to the development of 'good luck'.

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John B Will

The Mechanics of Luck



Reliance on four leaf clovers, amulets and horoscope forecasts is for the ignorant and the desperate. Consistent 'good luck' is the result of cultivating the right habits and the development of certain skill-sets.

by
John B Will

I have always been lucky. As a kid my mother used to tell people that if ever I fell off a cliff, I would bounce on a soft tree, land in a deep pool with barely a splash and come up with a gold nugget clenched between my teeth. To date, my life has played out just as if she actually knew what she was talking about.

I do believe that fate plays a part; we turn left when we could have turned right and our future unfolds accordingly. I also believe that some people do just seem luckier than other people and enjoy a consistency of good fortune that cannot be explained by mere chance; there is obviously something going on. Creating an abundance of good luck is a process; and like any process, once understood, it becomes easier and easier to replicate.

MARS BARS, \$5 NOTES & FLYBOXES

My father and I had decided to take a ten day drive around the Sierra Nevada mountain range in northern California. Our first stop was at a small trailhead, that led to a path along a small stream in the southern end of the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

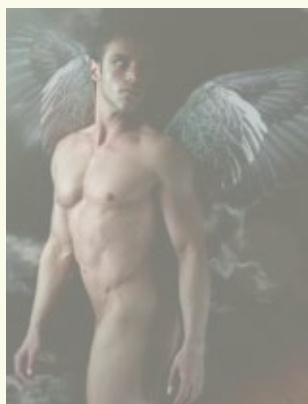
This day was unusual in that we were uncharacteristically ill-prepared. This was largely due to the fact that I was anxious to get five or six kilometres downstream so I could flyfish my way back to our car before the heat of the day set in. I figured we would both eat later, once we were back on the road.

An hour or so after leaving our car, I commented to my father, that I was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, and that I wished I had taken time and stopped for an early breakfast. No sooner had the words came out of my mouth, when I stopped in my tracks and reached down to pick up something I had spotted on the trail - an unopened candy bar - a Mars bar in fact. Now I am not a huge fan of canndy bars, but on this particular day, the find was most welcome. My father shook his head in wonder, and said "I don't beleive it!" I stuffed the much welcomed Mars bar in my pocket, before setting off to cover the last stretch of our downstream walk.

We had barely walked another thirty paces, when a

shiny reflection of something lying to the side of the trail, caught my attention. I bent over, peered into the long grass, and there it was - another Mars bar. This seemed just about right to me; now it would no longer be necessary to split the one I had in my pocket - as would have most definitely been necessary, as my father's sweet tooth was greater than my own.

"It could only happen to you" said my father, who had long since accepted my mother's assertion that I was simply born 'lucky'.



We are not born into this world controlling it; rather we start out in life, completely at it's mercy. One of the first habits we all develop, some more than others, is the art of 'noticing'. The more we 'notice' about our environment, the greater our chances of survival. Noticing opportunity and having awareness of how events unfold around us is crucial to the development of 'good luck'.

By the time we had arrived sufficiently far enough downstream for me to assemble my flyrod and begin fishing back up, I had added a packaged cookie and two \$5 notes to my collection of found treasures. We enjoyed the Mars bars and cookie, and lamented that we would have to wait until we were back out on the road before we could spend the \$10 on a couple of coffee's to wash it all down. Sometimes, that's just how it goes.

Having strung up my flyrod, I stepped into the stream and pulled five or six metres of line off my reel. A few strokes of the rod and I cast the line upstream, causing the fly to land just ahead of an overhanging rocky outcrop; a perfect lie for the Californian brook trout that I was fishing for.

The fly bobbed perkily on the surface for a metre or so before a speckled brown head eased out of the water and snaffled the offering down. I tightened the line and the fight was on. A minute or two later, I landed my first Californian Brookie, had my dad take a quick pic with my camera, before releasing him back into the cool depths of the stream. One cast - one fish; a nice start to the morning.

And so it went; the Brookie's were gobbling down all of my offerings, which were tiny imitations of an insect called a caddis fly. The caddis is very small, moth-like, with white wings; and as the morning wore on, the imitations of this insect that I had in my flybox, were slowly being depleted. By 11am or so, I was down to my last caddis imitation and the next fish I fooled with it, left it bedraggled to the point of uselessness. It seemed the party was finally over!

My dad and I sat down on a log that had toppled into the stream to divide the, as yet, uneaten cookie that I had found earlier. My dad was in a good mood, I suspect he was relieved that we were nearly back to our car, and that our journey north would soon resume.

I was lamenting at the loss of all my flies; especially in view of the fact that I knew we would be passing many enticing streams on our trip north, and not knowing where I would be able to replenish my supply. I had caught and released several dozen plump trout that morning; all in all, one of the best days I have had.

Munching on the cookie, staring into the water, I thought I noticed something shiny between a couple of the rocks on the streambed. I took off my shirt, waded out a couple of steps and reached down to grasp the thing that had caught my eye.



Once we consciously acknowledge our objectives, the filtering mechanisms in our mind give permission for information relevant to our needs to slip through from the external environment. In other words, we must 'acknowledge the need' if we are to increase the likelihood of our 'noticing'.

To astonishment of both of us, the shiny object turned out to be a small aluminium flybox. I sat down on the log, and opened it up. And there they were, all neatly ordered in size, about three dozen caddis fly imitations; thoroughly soaked, but in perfect condition.

Fifteen minutes later, I had succeeded in drying them out, and so armed, continued to fish my way up the last kilometre of stream and back to our car.

Once again my father could not refrain from commenting on the extraordinary luck that I was experiencing that day. ‘Unbelievable’ he muttered several times as we walked back to our car and put my flyfishing gear away, “The odds against you finding a boxful of flies are barely calculable; but to find the exact set of flies that you needed; that I cannot even begin to imagine.”

His comment was interesting, and it led to an even more interesting discussion as we drove northward up Highway 395 toward the small township of Bishop.

I disagreed that this was unlikely. ‘Unlikely, compared to what?’ I postulated.

In my view, the very fact that each of us is even here to discuss the subject, is in itself a miracle of monumental proportions. Just think of it, the odds in favour of our being here, when countless billions before us died before they had the opportunity to procreate, are so infinitesimally small, that can barely be given significance.

Think of the evolutionary path that leads back in time to the first of our ancestors who swam in the primordial soup several billion years ago. Every single one of our ancestors had to survive long enough to be able to reproduce, to allow for the set of circumstances to eventuate in our own birth. Not one of our millions of ancestors managed to die before procreating and thereby setting down the next step in the evolutionary path that has ultimately led to each of us being born.

My father, being well-versed in logic and a man of science and reason, believed that man is, in the larger scheme of things, just another type of animal, albeit a highly evolved one. He read Darwin's Theory of Evolution as a youngster, and ever since had marvelled at the extraordinary nature of the evolutionary process.

What he hadn't previously thought about was the absolutely extraordinary chain of events that had to occur for each of us to have even been born at all. We are, in every way that matters, each and every one of us, incredibly and monumentally, lucky.

The fact that I found a flybox full of flies, in a trout stream where other fishermen frequent, almost pales into probability when compared to the odds against us being here in the first place.

Flyboxes, Mars bars and \$5 notes - I almost expect these these to be there when I need them. When talking about luck, it's important to keep things in perspective.



When considering 'good luck', it would serve us well to keep things in perspective. The true miracle is that any of us are here at all. The odds against us being here, are astronomical in the extreme. The mere fact, that every single one of our ancestors, leading back to the dawn of life on earth, managed to survive long enough to reproduce, is a miracle beyond the ability of any of us to fully comprehend.

NOTICING & OUR INBUILT FILTER

I have, over many years of travelling, adventuring and martial arts training, nurtured and developed a variety of skills; one of them being the ability to 'take notice' of things. In my view, the more we take notice of things and events in our environment, the 'luckier' we become.

The amount of information coming at us from the environment is simply astounding. Think of the never-ending stream sounds, smells, sights, tastes and feelings that assault our senses each waking moment; how could we ever expect to process them all. The simple fact is, that we cannot.

Each of us, thankfully, is equipped with a 'filter' of sorts, sometimes referred to as the R.A.S or Reticular Activating System. One of the things that this does for us is to 'filter out' all unnecessary information, of which there is a lot, and only allow that which is relevant through to our attention.

I was recently at an airport in Singapore, waiting for a flight that had been delayed. I found a good seat in a quiet corner, retrieved my laptop from my bag, took out some earpphones, jamming one into one ear (leaving the other ear 'on task' to take in info from my environment) and began to post a new blog on my website whilst listening to some music. To all intents and purposes, I was completely and thoroughly engaged in what I was

doing - listening to music whilst crafting my latest blog - my senses were still connected and attuned at some level, to the sounds, smells and other stimuli coming from my environment. Now with the thousands of different sounds and movements happening all around me in that environment, it is no wonder that my own R.A.S was busy and working at full capacity - otherwise I may well have been unable to cope with the sensory overload. But the moment they called my name over the loudspeaker, because I had apparently mis-read the noticeboard, the words cut straight through to my consciousness.

'Mr John Will, could you please proceed immediately to Gate 31; your plane is in the final stages of boarding'. Out of all the sounds, all the announcements that were being broadcast, that's the one that found it's way through my R.A.S filter. Why? The answer is simple; because it had great personal significance to me.



Each of us are natural 'visualizers'. We are amazingly adept at daydreaming and pondering about events that have not happened yet. This is one of the things that sets us apart from the other members of the animal kingdom. We can look forward - we can visualize goals - our imagination paves the way.

The fact that each of us has one of these filters makes it even more important that we consciously acknowledge the things that are important to us and the things that we are 'looking for'. Once we acknowledge these things - this is often referred to as goal-setting - then our R.A.S filter will allow the relevant information through

when it presents itself. If we wander through life, uncertain of what we want and what things are important to us, then we shouldn't be surprised when our filter does its job and keeps the 'information and opportunities' away and at arm's length. We all need our R.A.S filters, otherwise we would likely suffer from insanity; but we have to let some things through, otherwise we would never achieve anything. Unlucky people, usually do not know what they are looking for; and their filter just does its job, and does it well.



Running blindly forward with no sense of purpose and undriven by passion will still get results; just don't expect those results to amount to anything much. Knowing what we want, no matter how vaguely we conceptualize it, will enable us to recognize those things, events and forces in the environment around us that can help us get those things that we want.

Personally, I have never been one to participate in the hardcore goal-setting exercises that have us writing our goals down daily, pasting pictures and sticky notes all over our houses and waking up murmuring mantra's and new-age affirmations.

I have, particularly in my youth, been accused of being a daydreamer. 'Will', my French teacher used to yell, 'are you in this class or not?' Clearly, I was in the

class, my thoughts though, were most certainly elsewhere. French, although appealing to some, just made no sense at all to me. Spanish, or one of the Asian languages, would have held my interest, something I could use; but French, c'mon! Please!

Whether daydreaming in French class, creatively musing as we wake up in the morning or pondering what we will do on our next week off; these are all effective ways of goal-setting. Goal setting begins with visualization; it is the act of consciously identifying what we want or need in the recesses of our own minds. We don't need to have the posters stuck up on the wall; we just need to own the idea inside of our heads; we are all natural 'visualizers', despite the efforts of our French teachers to rid us of this affliction.



I have never liked the 'poster & stick-it' note style of goal-setting. The only thing a poster on the wall will 'manifest' for us, will be perhaps, a family of spiders. Goal-setting is not anything that special, it is simply an inner-knowing, a conscious acknowledgment of what we want to move toward. Even children accomplish this with little or no effort.

When I bought my Mercedes SLK convertible, I couldn't believe how many I spotted on the roads in the month that followed. Of course, they were always there, but they never held personal significance for me. When things hold significance for us, we begin to notice them. Lucky people notice lots of things.

SPOOKY LUCK

Everytime I drive down to our local shopping center, my wife accuses me of having some preternatural gift for finding a parking space right out in front of the shop we want to visit. It does indeed seem that parking spaces do appear for me, just when and where I need them; it does seem to happen far more frequently than random chance would suggest it should. In my view though, it's just about noticing and subconscious timing. Even when looking for a parking space, decision-making does come into play.

Three cars are turning up one of the lanes at a parking lot; in deciding not to follow them and instead move on to the next lane, we automatically improve our chances of finding a car-space. We make lots of decisions like this, all the time, and such decisions can play very significant roles in how things turn out for us in everyday life. So much so, that at times the outcomes seem downright spooky!

I was in India one time, in the capital city of New Delhi. I went there to train in the various wrestling arts indigenous to northern India. One day I decided to head to the state reference library to do some less strenuous research; a day off, if you like.

I located, in a rarely visited corner of the library, a book entitled the 'Mallapurana'. The book had no real mon-

etary value, but as only 500 copies had ever been published, and those back in the 1960's, it would be difficult if not impossible to come by for any who sought it. I have copy number 174 and have a corrupt security guard to thank for it. In my defence, I do treasure it and am convinced I have saved it from a dusty and lonely existence in an unvisited room in the bowels of the New Delhi state reference library. Enough said.



Decision-making, like any other skill-set, can be honed and refined. Unknowingly, each and every day provides us with a myriad of opportunities to practice the development of this skill-set. More often than not, we make decisions with little or no conscious awareness; sometimes the result of a string of such decisions is misinterpreted as 'good luck'.

This special book, the larger part of which is written in the ancient Sanskrit language, describes an art called Vajramushti. This is an art that was once practised by a family known as the Jesthimallas. What makes this art so distinct and so very special is that it even survived at all. Vajramushti is a grappling-based art but differs from other styles in that the combatants are required to employ the use of knuckledusters during their contests. There are very few rules in the Vajramushti contest. It is a no-holds-barred affair that at one time was declared illegal in India, because of its singularly brutal

nature. Wrestlers would fight with knuckledusters tied to their right hands and could deliver blows to any part of the adversaries body. The contest was over, only when one fighter was rendered unconscious or gave a verbal admission of defeat.

The art is unique in that it combines grappling and striking techniques with the use of weaponry in a no-time-limit no-rules contest; a brutal art by either ancient or modern standards. I was determined to talk to someone who was at one time connected with this amazing form of combat.



We don't always have to make great decisions; more often than not our lives are determined by simply choosing not to make bad decisions. The elimination of what we do not want to do, what we do not want to have, can in itself be a powerful directive force.

I had two leads to go on. The first was the fact that I knew the Mallapurana was originally published in the city of Baroda; albeit back in the 1960's. The second was that I knew that the members of this clan were known as the Jesthimalla, an unusual name by all accounts. My travelling companion, Ron, and I stepped off the train and onto the dry, dusty streets of Baroda with a strong sense of excitement.

At that time, the city of Baroda had more than one

million inhabitants. I had the name of the family I was looking for as well as two old photos that were published in the original book. The photos of these fighters showed them to be perhaps in their late forties or so; knuckledusters strapped to their hands, competing in front of a crowd of cheering onlookers. If they were still alive, they would have to be mid to late seventies by now. I was not put off however, as I did seem to have some knack for ferreting out the things that other people seemed to find difficult in finding.

With Ron in tow, I went straight to the university. I walked about the university for half an hour until I found a young student that had both the time and inclination to accompany me for a day in the capacity of translator. He spoke excellent English, was intelligent and seemed fascinated that a foreigner had come to his home town in search for something he assured me did not exist. In fact, when I showed him my treasured copy of the Mallapurana, he was astounded that such a thing could ever have existed. And so we had our team.

The other thing that I had guessed at was that this Vajramushti fighting family were originally Vaishnavas; worshippers of the god Vishnu. I ascertained that this was the case because in both photos the Jeshthimalas had their heads shaven excepting for the ponytails that Krishna and Vishnu worshippers usually sported. It was the only other clue I had. So I asked my trans-

lator to take me to the oldest, most renowned temple of Vishnu in the city. After an hour or so, we found our way there. The temple was old and dusty, as most everything else seemed to be in Baroda. We took off our shoes and went inside; the cool interior was a relief from the oppressive desert heat that we had been baking in for the last hour.

Upon my request, my translator asked one of the old priests if he had ever heard of the Jesthimalla family; the old man looked at me, didn't seem to happy about the whole thing and in turn told us to go and ask at the house across the street. So out we went and knocked on the old green door of a small house not forty yards from the front of the temple. A few seconds went by before it was opened by a large man; a man in his late seventies; a man with a lot of scars on his face.

My translator made a gurgling noise and I wouldn't be surprised if my own mouth hadn't dropped open. There he was; the man in the photo!

The fact that the third person I had met in a city of over one million people was the one of three people photographed for a book published some twenty years earlier, was only a mild surprise to me. I knew I'd find him - after all, I was born lucky!

Seriously though, this kind of spooky luck was underpinned by a series of good decisions. I had decided to get myself a copy of the Mallapurana; I had decided to 'read' it; I had decided to start my search in the city in which it was written, after all, most of the Inidan population is poor and most die in the same cities in which

they are born; I had decided to obtain myself a translator to save time and misunderstandings; I decided to begin my enquiries at the temple located closest to the University where the book was published; I had decided to ask the eldest priest I found there, knowing he would have been alive at the same time as the man I was looking for; and I had decided to follow the priest's suggestion and knock on the door across the road. Now the last bit - the fact that the Shri Sitaram Jesthimalla lived right across the road from the temple - sure, that was pure, roll-of-the-dice good fortune. But the truth of it is, as long as he was alive, I am sure I would have tracked him down within a day or two.



*The world is smaller than we think,
Each of us is more connected than
most of us realize. We are all related.
We are all living, deciding, choosing,
dreaming and dying in the same
intimately-shared, ultra-thin slice of
time. We seek each other out to find
happiness.*

For you see - I knew what I was looking for - I made a series of good decisions, based on logic and reason - and I was not about to give up. With these ingredients in play - it's no wonder I was lucky. The universe conspires when we set ourselves to task - and especially when we do so with passion.

JOHN B WILL 2009

If you enjoyed this you might consider checking out my books at: <http://www.rogueblackbelt.com>