

Scientists may have some insight into why our minds turn to particular subjects at certain time, but I have no idea. I only know that I can begin to think about some subject, issue, idea, or person, and my thoughts might pursue this particular line of thinking for some time.

Last night, as I lay in bed waiting for sleep, I began to think about cursive writing. I remembered reading that learning to write in script is good for the mind, that there is a certain relationship between learning to read well, for example, and the movements of the hands as we write.

I know that many schools have ceased teaching cursive writing at all, and even hand printing has, much of the time, given way to keyboard activity. It seems, though, that this form of “writing” doesn’t have the same influence on our brains as writing by hand.

Some people I have talked to—folks much younger than I am—have asserted that cursive writing is already going the way of the dinosaurs and is headed for extinction. It is kind of an interesting concept that in the future, there may need to be experts who interpret and read old documents that have been executed in cursive styles.

I don’t like this idea at all. Distinctive handwriting styles are rich cultural and societal resources. People of my mother’s generation, for example, often had beautifully even cursive styles based on the Palmer method. This type of penmanship was developed and promoted by Austin Palmer in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. We used the same exercises when we were in school, but I don’t know how many of our classmates still write this way. Earlier, a script called Spencerian was the norm. The Palmer method was apparently derived from this earlier style.

And, people who went to school in other countries have a different handwriting style, as well. Runo’s sister, Inga-Lill, has beautiful penmanship that is as lovely as engraving on an invitation. But, it looks much different than the pretty handwriting one might encounter here in the United States.

I hope that schools begin to see the benefits of teaching penmanship again. Partly, because it is a skill that could easily become obsolete, like many other abilities that were vital in earlier times.

Besides, though, an interest in handwriting can extend so easily to the instruments of writing. And, to some of us, or at least to me, they are items of fascination.

I love pencils. Right now, here in our cabin, there are only one or two pencils, and that distresses me. Free pencils given away by businesses seem to be things of the past. If any writing instrument is proffered as a gift to customers, it is much more likely to be a ballpoint pen, and, a poor excuse for one besides. The last “gift pencils” we have received have come from our local bank, and I hold out hope that they will bring forth another supply when the next Christmas season comes along.

In the meantime, I may have to buy pencils. I like those plain yellow ones or, even better, those that are unpainted. And, it is a bonus if the eraser is a good, useful one instead of those that are too hard to do a good job of erasing one’s mistakes.

I don't much like regular ballpoint pens, but I am attached to my G2 pen that uses the gel refills I can order. This pen is blue, but translucent, made of recycled water bottles. Sometimes, I buy the ink that is "bold," but usually, I choose the fine points, because the ink lasts much longer. And, I do use a lot of ink.

Then, too, there are the Sharpies. In what is, I fervently hope, my only similarity with the despicable person who occupied the White House before our current President Biden, I also am devoted to Sharpies. I have never tried to deface a weather map with mine, though, and have never used it to sign a copy of a check that I didn't help pay, but Sharpies do have their uses. I have the black version in my pocket at all times. I mark canning jar lids with it, write on garden markers, make note of sheep tag numbers on the wall where we are sorting. And, yesterday, I handed my Sharpie to someone else as I asked the young nursing student who gave me my second shot of vaccine if he would please autograph my T-shirt.

The nicest pen on the desk, though, isn't usable right now. A tiny tip has broken from the point of the lovely Waterman fountain pen Runo gave me years ago. That needs to go to the repair facility, as it is the best writing instrument I have.

So, handwriting is still, I think, an important skill, both for our minds and for the pure pleasure of putting pencil, pen, or even Sharpie to work recording our thoughts, activities, or complaints.