

Find My Purpose? In This Mess?

Experts suggest getting rid of the clutter to get down to what's real. Boy, am I in trouble.

by Jeff Wozer

Humorist and stand-up comedian

Without my consent, I own 57 T-shirts. How or when this happened, I don't know. I thought maybe 20, 25 at the most. But not 57. It's an embarrassing number, bordering on fetish.

Even more embarrassing is that I weighed the T-shirts, the cause behind this triggered more by guilt than curiosity. For they say it's not what you eat that creates guilt-inducing motivation, but rather how much you weigh.

I felt like a king-fool weighing the tees, one stack at a time, on the bathroom scale. But this foolishness paled compared to the brain-bending shock of discovering I'm T-shirt obese. I own 26 pounds of them. I don't know what my ideal T-shirt weight should be, but I'm guessing I'm at least 20 pounds over.

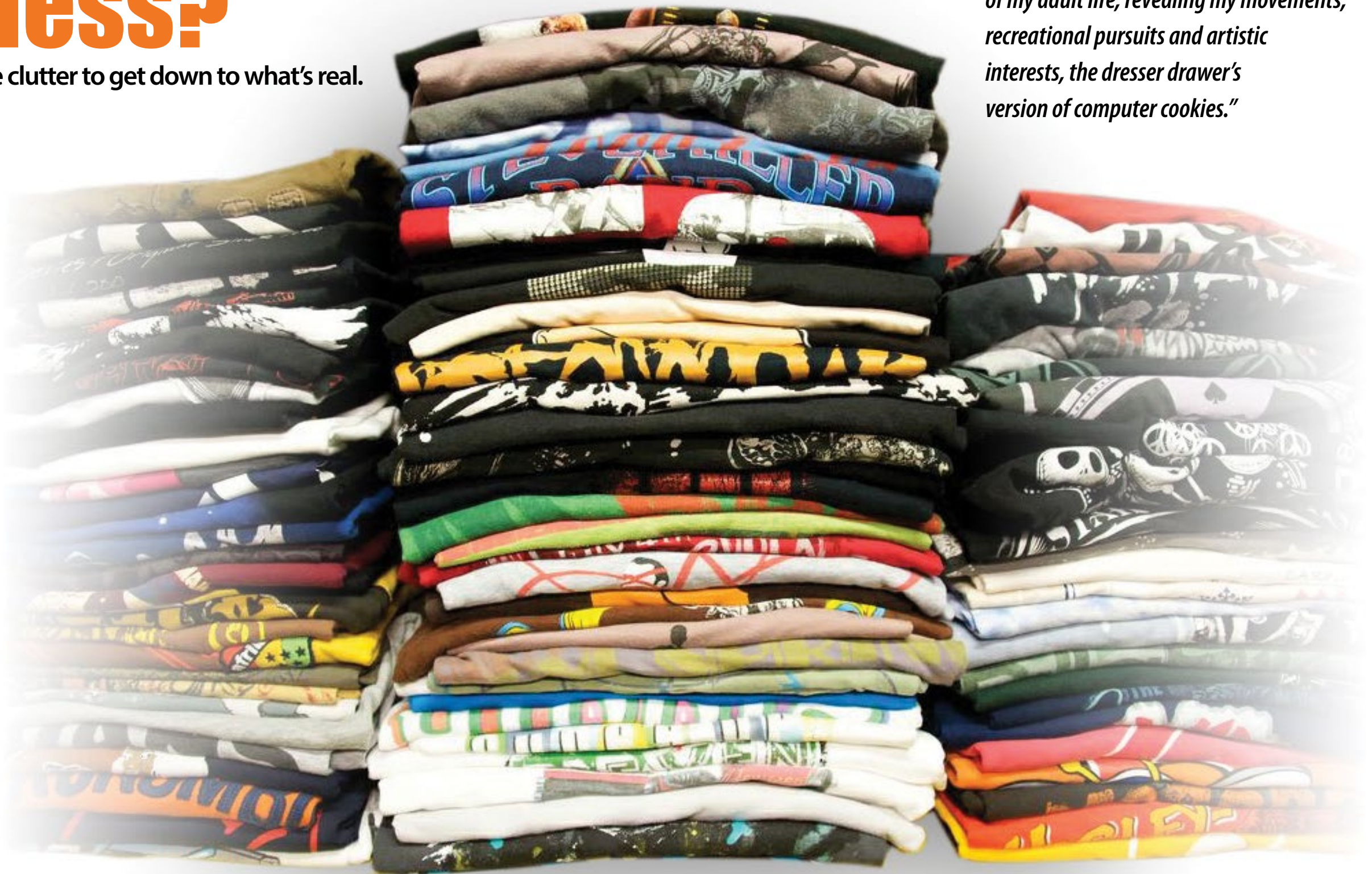
I'd been experiencing difficulty closing my dresser drawers as of late but blamed it on careless folding rather than extra pounds. A classic case of living in denial.

The genesis of this unwanted discovery stemmed from a *Huffington Post* article I stumbled across online titled "Life After 50: Are You Stuck? Lose the Clutter and Find Your Life." The author suggested shedding clutter — hence the clever title — as a means of freeing ourselves from feeling stuck in old ways with the ultimate intent of finding our second-half purpose in life.

Not that possessing a purpose dominated my every waking thought, but the idea of having a life-lubricant, something that would make me bound out of bed drunk with ambition, hit me as a sound idea.

This T-shirt thing was like uncovering a deep secret about myself. How did this happen? Was I buy-polar? And, ultimately, how will shedding a few pounds of T-shirts contribute to finding life's purpose?

As I mulled this, I haphazardly spread the T-shirts across the living room floor, hoping they



"My clothing collection resembled a journal of sorts, a cotton shirt timeline of my adult life, revealing my movements, recreational pursuits and artistic interests, the dresser drawer's version of computer cookies."

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would provide clues to my purpose in life. All but one displayed a person, place or thing, making me wonder if I enjoy wearing T-shirts or nouns. Instead of a clothing collection, it resembled a journal of sorts, a cotton shirt timeline of my adult life, revealing my movements, recreational pursuits and artistic interests; the dresser drawer's version of computer cookies.

Among the notables were 11 shirts from places I skied, including two each from Park City, Alta and Vail.

My Vermont years were depicted in Bread Loaf, Middlebury and Green Mountain Club T-shirts.

Nods to Hunter Thompson, Monty Python and painter Russell Chatham revealed creative interests.

Two Salmon Nation T-shirts and a Protect Our Winters shirt showed environmental leanings.

Nine Mountain Khaki tees confirmed my role as a company ambassador.

Endorsements for favorite escape towns — Taos, New Mexico, and Moab, Utah — appeared on six shirts.

And a Grateful Dead concert T-shirt from the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC) in upstate New York, dated June 27, 1985, took honors as the oldest of my collection.

Thinking perhaps the nouns contained my answer, I looked for a pattern and immediately noticed that many of the T-shirts touted the following places: Moab, Taos, Vail, Alta, Park City and SPAC. Ye gads, I thought. I'm attracted to four-letter, mainly mono-syllabic words with an affinity toward the letter "A."

Perhaps my purpose lies in Ames, Iowa. Maybe this is my Field-of-Dreams-build-it-and-they-will-come moment. Instead of a baseball diamond (too many syllables), I move to Ames, Iowa, and dig a bass pond. I quickly soured on this idea at the thought of dead fishermen emerging from cornfields, filling my backyard, and talking 24/7 about Larry the Lunker and ones that got away.

And, besides, I could never live in Iowa. I'm too spooked by tornados. Two of my three closest tornado scares came while there — the last coming while on a comedy tour in Iowa City and me cursing myself for taking shelter from an approaching funnel cloud in a store called Target.

Believing I was on to something, I scanned the shirts again and noticed a rarely worn one, from Patagonia,

that did not fit into any category. Instead of a noun it featured advice: "Live Simply."

Eureka, I thought, I have my purpose!

Living simply might not be the most enlightening purpose, but it's a start, and, at the very least, a worthy code to follow. Besides, so what if I lack a true life-defining purpose at my age. As the T-shirts before me prove, it's possible to enjoy a rich and interesting life without a defined role or direction; cluttered dresser drawers and all. ♦



BRAIN GAMES ANSWERS / From Page 18

Answers to Crossword Puzzle

T	A	I	C	P	A	T	H	E	A	G	E				
A	E	C	S	O	U	L	B	O	N	D	D	N	A		
G	R	E	A	T	A	P	E	A	N	D	I	M	O	U	T
S	P	I	C	H	A	S	N	O	F	I	X	E	D		
W	H	I	C	H	H	A	S	N	O	F	I	X	E	D	
C	H	E	E	K	O	B	I	E	D	I	V	E	D		
N	I	E	C	E	E	S	T	E	R	E	M	E	N	D	
O	T	T	E	R	S	E	D	I	T	S	S	Y	S		
A	P	T	R	I	S	E	S	O	D	D	I	T	Y		
D	R	U	P	E	I	D	A	H	O	E	E	R	I	E	
D	O	T	E	D	G	R	E	W	A	C	R	E	S		
P	U	R	P	O	S	E	I	N	L	I	F	E	I	S	
C	O	R	E	D	E	N	T								
B	U	T	Y	L	E	N	E	E	D	E	N	T	A	T	E
E	G	O	L	O	S	T	P	E	A	S	T	U	G		
T	H	Y	S	E	A	A	E	S	E	E	G				

Answers to Sudoku

4	6	7	8	9	3	2	5	1
8	2	9	5	1	4	3	6	7
5	1	3	6	7	2	8	4	9
6	3	1	7	5	9	4	2	8
2	7	8	4	6	1	9	3	5
9	4	5	3	2	8	7	1	6
1	8	6	2	4	7	5	9	3
3	5	2	9	8	6	1	7	4
7	9	4	1	3	5	6	8	2



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