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TEN LOGS

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January 1st is a date synonymous with New Year's resolutions. When the ball atop Times Square drops, countless people either start something new or quit something old. Shortly afterward, as January settles in, such pledges are tested. Sadly, most people struggle to make it through the first few weeks, or even days, before abandoning their efforts. I have certainly made my share of New Year's resolutions, only to falter and, eventually, allow them to fade from memory. We can easily excuse ourselves for letting small promises slip away. After all, desserts really are delicious! But, what about aspirations to achieve something of importance to you and value to others? Something meaningful, powerful, fulfilling.

Children, in particular, are great dreamers, encouraged by their devoted parents. When I was a boy, my mother often quoted poet Robert Browning:

*Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?*

Leaning on this passage, I dreamed big. But dreaming without action, most adolescents discover, doesn't get the job done. As adults, we too are dreamers and can do a pretty darn good job of imagining great events unfolding in our futures. Yet, the advantage we now have over our youthful days is the ability to not only think ahead, but to also plan a course of action toward achieving a goal. Like New Year's

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• Robert Browning

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resolutions, however, staying on track can be tricky, especially with regard to personal goals. The necessary discipline may be, perhaps, best illustrated anecdotally.

Every spring, after making full use of our fireplace throughout winter, a fresh cord of wood is delivered and dumped on a scraggly patch of grass adjacent to our garage; out of the way, but still in view. And, every spring, I have a choice: stack the wood and tidy up the area; or, convince myself the pile of wood is charmingly New England and leave it as is. Always, my desire and aim is to stack the wood, but lack of time seems a good excuse to stick with the rustic look. As if struck by Divine intervention one day, I pulled into our driveway and thought, *"Ten logs! If I stack ten logs every time I arrive home, slowly and steadily, I'll get the job done."* For eleven days, I did just that. Admittedly, there were moments when I would return home in the dark, tired from the day, bypassing the woodpile. Upon entering the house, one of my kids would ask, "Did you stack ten logs?" Back outside I went.

In high school, I wrote an essay entitled, "*Dreams are Merely Pondered. Goals are Accomplished.*" Regardless of age, we all delight in dreaming big; like good fiction, daydreaming offers a fun pause in life. Likewise, we can have fun with a variety of New Year's resolutions, whimsical and otherwise. But, again, what about aspirations to achieve something of importance to you and value to others? The start of a new year is a great time to highlight any meaningful, powerful, and fulfilling goal. Motivated by your vision, set out to accomplish it... ten logs at a time.