

## **Life is a Privilege (In Memory of Wade Haines) – December 2018**

I have thought much about death this week, particularly at night when I tried to sleep. We had client meetings scheduled to work on a controller training program with a company's Training Analyst, SCADA Technologist, and a Control Room Operator. The 45-year-old Control Room Operator died in a hotel room the night before the meeting.

Later that day, as we were dealing with the shock, I told them of my days as a minister. I sometimes used the John Donne poem from the 1600s, "No Man is an Island" at funerals. I read them these lines, probably as much for myself as for them.

*Any man's death diminishes me,  
Because I am involved in mankind,  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.*

Since 2017, I had several interactions with Wade Haines in his role as a Control Room Operator. He knew his work well and was interested in improving how the work was done and the control room itself. Like Controllers everywhere, he had definite opinions on what needed to be done and who needed to do them.

He did not necessarily think he was the correct one to write procedures and do the CRM work, but he was willing to contribute his expertise to the efforts. I did not know him well, but do know his death diminishes me. I pray his wife, children, other family members, and coworkers receive comfort and strength from one another and from God.

I thought about other coworkers by name that have died through the years and wonder why some of us get to live longer than others and whether or not we appreciate that fact. If you have been reading these articles, you will recall that I have been using Stoic philosophy in relationship to Control Room Management. Marcus Aurelius wrote these words:

*When you arise in the morning, think of what a privilege it is  
To be alive, to think,  
To enjoy, to live*

My colleagues chide me for talking often about my death and tell me to stop. But thinking about death is an important part of being a philosopher. My favorite philosophy course was "Death and Dying." Socrates in *The Phaedo* said that those who practice philosophy are preparing themselves for death. That was also a prominent theme in the Stoic texts.

A privilege is a right given to or an advantage granted to an individual or to a group. Even as I prepare for death, I do consider it a privilege to arise in the morning. I seek to use each day to think about meaningful subjects, to face what the day presents without grumbling about petty annoyances, to live a life of servant leadership, to enjoy my interactions with people no matter who they are and where they are, and to be kind to others and myself. Some days I do better than others, but that next day is still a privilege and an opportunity to do better.

What is your approach when you arise to a new morning? Rest in peace, Wade.