And I Quote: "To Know Water Is To Love Water"

By Jim Lauria

It all started with Mark Twain. Or someone who actually wasn't Mark Twain after all.

I wanted to post one of my favorite quotes about water — "Whiskey's for drinking, water's for fighting over" — on LinkedIn as a little conversation starter. But as I dug around trying to verify the source, I realized that Mark Twain didn't say what they said he said...at least when it came to whiskey and water. In fact, nobody's quite sure who actually said it.

That foray got me thinking about other great quotes about water, too. I have worked all over the world in the water industry, from managing water treatment in the Florida sugar industry to selling filtration products across Asia to my current role at Mazzei, and read a mountain of books on water. I've always enjoyed a good quote, and tend to enjoy it even more when it's about water.

It struck me that if we really want to teach the general public about the value of water, it would be worthwhile to go back and look at what we've said about it through the ages. I started collecting quotes from scientists and philosophers, environmentalists and comedians, movie characters and real-life hydro-luminaries (the big thinkers on water).

And like many collectors, I wanted to share my treasures with the rest of the world.

**Spreading The Words**

My plan was to spend a year sharing water quotes. I figured I'd share a quote a week for a year, but with so many brilliant comments in my ever-growing collection, I upped the ante to a quote a day. I figured I'd follow the lead of *Julie and Julia* author Julie Powell, who cooked Julia Child recipes every day for a year — I could surely come up with a worthwhile quote in the same timeframe. In fact, time at the keyboard would be a lot easier for me than time in the kitchen: my cooking has been described as a controlled burn.

It's World Water Day, a perfect excuse to take stock of the project. Today I'll post my 167th quote, marking my 160th day in a row.

The funny thing is I'm not even getting tired of it.

**Immersed In The Subject**

Part of what keeps this effort fresh is the sheer brilliance of the quotes I find. And for sheer brilliance, nobody tops my number-one source, Leonardo da Vinci. Renowned as the world's foremost genius, I figured he was a good guy to go to. That turned out to be a great move for many reasons, not least of all the fact that Leonardo spent a good chunk of his career assessing water as a source of power and as a force to be harnessed for warfare.

I wrote about Leonardo in this LinkedIn post, and find that his wisdom inspires me every time I read one of his statements on water. There are plenty of those statements, which is why he's number one by volume on my list, followed by Jacques Cousteau at number two (which is no surprise, as he was usually immersed in the subject) and Theodore Roosevelt at number three.

Activist thinkers get a lot of attention in my list. In addition to Cousteau and Thoreau (both of whom have names that end with the French word for water), there are touches of wonder from Loren Eisley ("If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in water") and fragments of pragmatism from Edward Abbey ("There is no lack of water in the Mojave Desert unless you try to establish a city where no city should be").

There's comedy from George Costanza of *Seinfeld*, Carl Reiner, and Steve Bhaerman of

Swami Beyondananda fame, and quotes by everyone from DH Lawrence to BJ Thomas.

Water wisdom flows from China, Africa, Ancient Greece, the beaches of Hawaii, and Native American villages.

Views average about 1,000 per day, and likes come in from around the world.

John F. Kennedy garnered the second-highest number of likes so far with his comment that, "Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes — one for peace and one for science." I'm proud to say that I'm the author of the line with the most likes: "I love water, but sometimes it exhibits bad behavior. It's bi-polar and wanted in three states."

**To Know Water Is To Love Water**

After 160 straight days of posting quotes, I can already start to imagine the big finale of my little experiment. But as that day approaches, I'll be on my way to releasing my book, *To Know Water is To Love Water*, a collection of wisdom, musings, lessons, and lore about water drawing from my own experiences and many of the same sages, comics, and hydro-luminaries I've been posting here. My goal is to give people at least a year's worth of quotes that help initiate thoughtful conversations on water. After all, water is connected to everything we hold dear, from our health to our children to our smartphones and cheeseburgers. It's something we all have in common, every day, no matter who or where we are. It's not just more precious than gold (as the character Howard said in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*) — water is life itself.

But while the book is still in its pre-press stages, let's commemorate World Water Day with the oldest, most fundamental quote in my collection. It's by Thales of Miletus, one of the Seven Wise Men of Ancient Greece, an astronomer and mathematician so accomplished that he correctly predicted a total solar eclipse on May 25, 585 BC. As much as he had his eye on the stars, Thales clearly had his feet in the water when he pointed out:

"Water is the first principle of everything."

Happy World Water Day.

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