



LYLE'S LAWS

# Lyle's Law of Glimmers

**h**ARVEY DUNN IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE artists. In case you are not familiar with him, I'll give you a little background. Dunn was born on a farm in eastern South Dakota in 1884 and, at the age of 17, enrolled in what was to become South Dakota State University. He didn't stay there for long, however. One of his teachers recognized his considerable artistic talent and suggested that he study art in a more serious way, which he did, first in Chicago and later in Wilmington, DE.

Dunn was of the genre of N.C. Wyeth who was a classmate and friend and, indeed, best man at Dunn's wedding. He was an illustrator for several magazines and produced battlefield drawings for the U.S. Army in France during World War I. I like his style, and I like the subjects he chose later in his life—scenes of the South Dakota prairie, an area that I know and love. I also admire his spirit and vision which, as will presently be revealed, lead us to Lyle's next law.

I am taking a bit of a risk, here, because I am going to depend on my memory, an increasingly unreliable source. As I recall, Dunn wrote about his early years on the farm and on the campus and in describing his own awakening, used a phrase that struck me as ever so descriptive of a spirit that moves people—if not always to greatness—at least to greater fulfillment. He said that he was more or less content where he was, but then he could not fail to notice "the glimmering at the horizon."

What an image that conjures. A cold, dark, winter night on the great prairie. A light in the house and another in the barn and one or two more at other farms, far in the distance. Otherwise, darkness. Except. Except at the far horizon where something is glimmering, flickering, just beyond the familiar, awakening in a young farm boy, a wish, a need to go and find out what is there. Dunn's expression and the image it inspires lead us, as promised, to Lyle's Law of Glimmers: **Mind the glimmering at the horizon.**

We don't know just what glimmerings Dunn saw, but we know they led him to Brookings and then

to Chicago and then to Wilmington and then to France. Neither do we know what glimmerings he saw and chose to ignore, but I suspect there were a few, and I also suspect that he regretted ignoring them.

But enough about Dunn. How about the glimmerings that we see?

Certainly there are glimmerings that are geographic—a faint sparkle at the horizon that suggests it might be interesting to try life in another part of the country or even of the world. These are easy glimmerings to ignore, because leaving home means giving up all that is familiar and safe for the challenges of finding a new place to live, developing new friends, scouting new stores, and just generally making a new home. But the rewards are usually great as well, not only for the people who have moved, but also for their new friends, their new employers, and for the community in general.

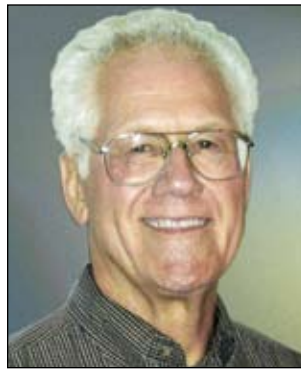
I suspect that most people have had a glimmer of a thought that they would like to travel or even live for a while in another country. Yet only about one-fifth of U.S. citizens have passports. As our world continues to shrink, we need more people to mind that glimmering and spend time in other countries developing a deeper understanding of other cultures. Students, in

particular, will benefit from international experience. And the faculties need to help them get it.

There are other kinds of glimmers, of course. People glimmers, for instance. Someone who is beyond the horizon that defines your circle of friends but who seems to sparkle and would probably be interesting to know. Keep meeting people.

There are job glimmers, too.

While your first duty at work is to do your job well (a future law will speak to this), it is always good to keep your eye on the horizon. There will be opportunities within your own organization and in others as well. Keep an eye out for them, and, at the appropriate time, dare to peek over that horizon and check on a particular glimmer. It may be just right for you, and you will never know if you don't investigate.



## *Mind the glimmering at the horizon*



Winter Night, Harvey Dunn; image courtesy South Dakota Art Museum

## LYLE'S LAW

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Of course, not all such opportunities come to fruition. I pursued a couple of presidential glimmers and even one provost glimmer, but the sparkle flickered out either by my choice or theirs. But it was fun trying.

And there are intellectual glimmers. No matter how well read and how educated and how experienced we are, our horizons are very limited compared to the breadth of human endeavor. Whoever has eyes to see, however, will find glimmerings around the entire perimeter. The problem here is not in finding a flicker but in deciding which flicker to follow. How about some history? Ancient Rome? Panama Canal? The Great Depression? Or economics? Or political science? Or learn to paint? Or study the great painters? Learn another language. Learn more about your own language. Learn how to trick your computer into doing what you want it to do instead of what the software developers think it should.

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### *Glimmers? The horizon is ablaze.*

So mind the glimmering at your horizon. And go investigate some of those glimmers. Not only might the glimmer prove interesting, but the very act of going there will push your horizon to a new location, opening up new vistas. Horizons and rainbows are similar in that way. You will never know if there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow because as you approach it, it moves away. Horizons move, too, and because horizons limit what you can see, the more you can move them away, the wider your vision will be. And that wider horizon will undoubtedly exhibit more glimmerings to entice you.

—Lyle D. Feisel, Ph.D., P.E., *Iowa Alpha '61*

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