

The Ticking of Time

Category: Watching the Clock

written by Ronna L. Edelstein | September 1, 2022

To celebrate my sixth birthday, my family and I traveled to Niagara Falls. Just before returning home, they gave me my present—my first grown-up watch. Although a simple piece of jewelry with its round face, black hands, and silver stretch band, I embraced it as if it were a rare gem.

About six months later, however, I complained that the gift was a bad one. I explained that the forty-five minutes of gym class—a class that forced me to conquer the forward roll, even though my legs, arms, torso and head refused to cooperate—crawled by. But the forty-five minutes I spent in the library, engrossed in a picture book that allowed me to escape forward rolls as well as science and math, raced by like the manic Mad Hatter.

My parents and grandma responded to my indignation with a sigh. They could not explain to a child that time is subjective. It operates in its own way and, the older we get, the more quickly it passes.

Only now do I finally understand these words. My traumatic July 2 fall, resulting in a painful fractured pelvis, caused the month of July to last forever. But my seventy-fifth birthday on August 8 reminded me that the years have disappeared in a blink of an eye.

My injury and age have turned me into a clock watcher: a woman too aware that most of my time is behind me and that not much time awaits me. I perceive all my watches and clocks as symbolic enemies that too quickly transform the present into the past and energetic, optimistic youth into challenging, tarnished older age.

While recently going through my jewelry box, I discovered that first watch lying under a strand of twisted pearls. I found it ironic that this watch—the one that had introduced me to the idiosyncrasy of time—has lain silent for so many years, while the second and minute and hour hands of my life have kept moving forward.

Yet, rather than let watches and clocks mock me and toy with my precarious hold on life, I choose to make each moment special. I live my life, filling it with family, friends, classes, books and theatre. But even when no watch encircles my wrist or the battery on the wall clock dies, I can still hear the inevitable ticking of time.

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