

From This Corner
Time Like an Ever-Rolling Stream
Larry Baird

I'm not sure when it happened. It may have been when our oldest son and I were in the front yard doing the father – son thing. He was batting a baseball into the air. I was catching them. One went at a crazy angle and I went after it to prove my athletic prowess. I had it in my sight when all of a sudden I collided with one of the trees that inhabited the area. Since I was moving rapidly and leaning forward to catch the ball my head hit first. I dropped to the ground in heap. At least I am told I did. The specifics of the event are still a little fuzzy. To be honest I remember little except the “shock and awe” of encountering the tree. I would like to tell you that I caught the ball. My son quickly responded in a rush of concern you would expect, and when finding I was still alive his relieved laughter became part of the memory. He now tells the story much better than I, with more clarity, and more humor.

Anyway, I think that was one of those occasions when I realized an age had passed. I remember deciding in the hours following, ice pack on my brow that whatever minimal athletic career I had was suddenly over. Brenda just gave me one of those knowing looks that communicated far better than a lecture. I noticed our sons also adjusted to a mode of taking better care of dad. Perhaps they viewed me for the first time as “their old man” but had the better sense not to begin referring to me as such.

Another such moment came sometime between my first appointment and my present when the matriarchs of the churches stopped saying to me “you’re such a nice young man.”

Then most recently it happened on an airplane flight when a woman was seated next to me and started the conversation off as though I was a sage elder. It took me aback for a moment until I realized that she was probably young enough to be my daughter. It

turned out she was feeling overwhelmed and stressed with her hectic life and was looking for some counsel. When, I pondered, had the world been taken over by these otherwise competent professional juveniles? And when had I become the source of the wisdom of the ages? I remember noting as we all left the plane that most of the passengers, the flight crew, and the pilots were all too young to possibly have the responsibilities with which they were entrusted.

All this and more has brought me to contemplate the long and short of it. In many ways it seems as though I have indeed lived long enough to have gained some wisdom, but in other ways it seems like it has been a blur and in that respect rather short. Perhaps you like I wonder where all that time flew and how we have come to this stage in life.

Psalm 90 and Isaac Watts in his reflections in his hymn "Oh God Our Help in Ages Past" penned,

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day."

While I have always sung that great song of faith with appreciation, I have to tell you it seems nowadays that the Psalmist and Isaac were profoundly on target. Life is a gift that in best cases gives us plenty of time to do the good and God-honoring things we are called to do. On the other hand, if we are not careful it can flit away misused.

And so I arrive at a point of potential mid-life crisis. I can act like a fool and attempt to chase after every fly ball out of my reach, or I can act my age and share some modicum of wisdom with those traveling with me on the journey. Watts also wrote,

"Our souls should learn the heavenly act,
To improve the hours we have;

That we may act the wisest part,
And live beyond the grave.”

So I think I'll not embark upon making a fool of myself. God willing, maybe this can be the wisest part. For time like an ever-rolling stream flows on, and brings different and new possibilities for a chance at a life well lived.