

BY DAVID SEABURN

More More Time

Discovering the endless present

GIANNA—18 months old, with a broad smile, tangled strawberry hair, dancing blue eyes—begs me to play her favorite game as she flops onto her parents' kitchen floor. I happily agree, taking hold of her noodly arms and beginning to swish her back and forth as she howls with laughter. After several minutes,



though, my face is beet red, and my back is aching. I slow down, hoping she won't notice, but she urges me on. I speed up again, now panting hard and finally suggesting that we're getting close to the end of our game. "One more time," I say in a breathless, though pleasant voice. Gianna hears something different: "More more time!" she cries, thinking I'm committing to an endless round of pull-my-granddaughter-around-the-kitchen-floor-by-her-arms. No matter how many times I say "one more time," Gianna hears "more more time," eventually believing that's the name of the game.

That was in 2010, when I was still in my first year of retirement, trying to figure out what I was going to do with "more more time," now that the clock didn't completely rule my life. That year teemed with questions. What would I make of my life now? How would I traverse the road ahead? Would this be

a time of creative reassessment and new ventures, a period of ripening more than aging, a yeasty time of promise? Or would it be life's Big Step Aside—where I end up forever on the platform watching the train whiz by, its cars full of eager, driven, productive people who are still utilizing their talents and reaching their goals? Even worse, do I really have "more more time"? Or is that an illusion, a veil hiding the ugly fact that there's very little time left at all? Is the road ahead wide with hope, or is it just a slippery slope leading to the Final Parking Lot? When I read the obituaries (and you'll read them, too, once you retire), everyone is my age—or younger!—and they're all smiling. Why? Do they know something I don't? All this ruminating made me think, Gee, my robe feels so nice and warm this morning, my tea is just right, maybe I'll stay in bed.

Don't get me wrong. I retired eagerly and gladly, yet once I arrived on the shores of this new land, I wasn't sure how to get oriented. Compass, please! Map, anyone? Perhaps, I thought, I could approach this phase of life like those aging movie stars on the covers of *AARP Magazine*, smiling as if to say, "Gosh, why couldn't I have gotten older sooner? It's such fun!" Or I could let the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* be my guide, despite the fact that in defining *retire* it uses the word *withdrawal* eight times, as well as *recede*, *retreat*, and *seclude*. But somehow I was skeptical about AARP's insistence that retirement (code for aging) can be an endless romp on the beach at Boca. And Merriam-Webster made me feel like I should throw in the towel or wave a white flag.

Throughout that first year, I remained confused. I lay awake at night thinking about retirement, about the past, about the future, about what I'd done along the way, about what I'd like to do, until slowly it all morphed into a basic, though more elusive, question—one about time itself. All my adult life, I've lived by the day planner, often in hourly increments. What was written on its pages and how I organized my time devoted to its activities defined me, moved me forward, gave my life meaning. Despite complaining that every moment of every day was booked, sometimes for months in advance, I wore the burden of an overly scheduled life with honor and experienced

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