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Footprints in the Sand

*Time Goes, You Say?
Ah No!
Alas,
Time Stays,
We Go.*

The Paradox of Time—Henry Dobson

How do we mark this passage? The seconds are linked together, almost invisible. Since most changes require more than a heart-beat, the seconds are easy to forget. Minutes and hours are the time most noted. The agony of some events makes it easy to wish the time of our life away. The boring lecture, the interminable meeting, the painful experience all lead inexorably to the unvoiced and perhaps even unconscious thought "I wish this were over." For most of us, the longer intervals, the days, seasons, years, and decades rush by. We notice it suddenly. Our patients are younger, the snow is not as deep, toddlers graduate from college, and the strands of grey become very apparent as we look in the mirror. Still the passage is difficult to define: the road behind us is clear, but that ahead is shrouded in fog. The events—beginnings, ends, and a few momentous experiences along the way—mark our passage, driving home the point that we had better get going to do what we want.

Is it difficult to remember what we had for breakfast yesterday because it is like so many other yesterdays or because we were so preoccupied with "important" matters that we hardly noticed this background activity? Some facts are very clear. By 40, we are out of warranty, and as if on cue, parts begin to wear out. Then it isn't only external events that serve as reminders of our passage, but our bodies as well: the ache, the scar, the relentless philosophizing. We begin prioritizing, ignoring the things that were so critical yesterday, and concentrating on the things that are really important.

It is said that life is what happens when you are making other plans. Now it is time to live those other plans, to get back on the merry-go-round and consider the day's agenda. But before I do, let's see, what was it I had for breakfast yesterday? Did I even have breakfast?

H. William Strauss
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