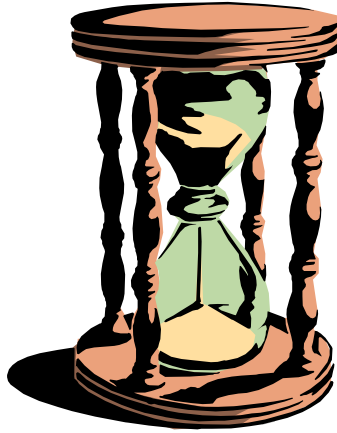


The Season



by Tony Beckwith © 2007
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IT'S MID-DECEMBER and the madness has begun. With just a few shopping days left till Christmas, some of us go a little crazy and start running around in ever-diminishing circles, like the last few gallons of water swirling around the plug as the bathtub empties. We suddenly have (or convince ourselves that we have) a seemingly insurmountable mountain of tasks ahead of us, that for some reason *absolutely must get done* before the world comes to an end on the 24th of December. Except that, so far, the world has never come to an end. So why do I do this chicken-without-a-head thing every year? I don't know. Do you?

I'd been feeling the same sort of pressure in connection with the annual Christmas card ritual and, overwhelmed by my anxiety and despair, gave vent to an ode called:

The Season

Dear friend or family member
here we are in mid December
and the year is coming swiftly to an end
If you're partial to eavesdropping
you will know I've done no shopping
and I still have all my Christmas cards to send

Lest you cry: procrastination!
and demand my flagellation
and complete humiliation
through some public proclamation
which would ruin my reputation
and promote exasperation
plus all kinds of aggravation
for no worthy compensation
let me give this explanation:

It has been a busy season
so I'll claim that as my reason
for being tardy with my presents and my cards
and I'll send them very soon
perhaps this very afternoon
in the meantime please accept my best regards

I felt better after venting like that. Then, yesterday, it suddenly dawned on your correspondent that the AATIA's January general membership meeting is being moved forward from the customary second

Saturday to the previous one, January 5th. THE LETTER, therefore, should follow suit and publish a week ahead of schedule. Yikes! That means the deadline is upon me, and I can dawdle no longer. At this stage I can really feel the tug of that swirling bathwater!

It wasn't always like this. There was a time when there was time for everything, or so it seemed. A time when we stepped out of whatever flow we were going with and took time for ourselves, to share with others or to reflect on life and digest the lessons therein. To make sense of it all. When we don't make time for that process, all the stuff we are bombarded with day after day is absorbed untreated, and fills our minds with clutter and confusion. The chaos within then perceives chaos without, and triggers a defense mechanism that manifests as road rage and a litigious society and a cavalier attitude towards the misfortunes of others. So I'm all in favor of coffee breaks and long lunches and naps. Like it used to be back then:

Once Upon a Time

I'm addicted to espressos
but I drink them much too fast
I haven't learned the art
of making cups of coffee last

At the Plaza Independencia
near my home in Uruguay
men in cafés whiled away the hours
and not a cup ran dry

It was a time
when time itself
was worth its weight in gold
when people sat
and sipped
and watched the day unfold

It now appears that my column is ready, although how that happened is a bit of a mystery. I can feel the anxiety lifting and my back straightening and my horizons expanding. I feel better than I've felt all day. Maybe the bathwater has swept me down the plug and I'm somewhere else, in a place where there seems to be plenty of time. ★