

My daughter bought a wedding dress. I haven't seen it, but I hear it's nice. I'm biased, but she'd look great in a trash bag. Even so, I'm sure she will dazzle in this garment (I would say "gown," but these things come in two pieces nowadays, I'm told) that will be ready in a year, with a few months before the wedding to spare.

What's the point? It's a subject I come back to continuously – I assume everyone does. Time. Time is relentless. Time doesn't slow to wait for anyone or anything. Time is inexhaustible in its quest to interminably pass. Time is unsympathetic, yet completely democratic. It's unconcerned with its impact on you. It has one purpose: To ensure that the possibility of this moment we are in at this very instant is lost forever after it passes. Time leaves nothing more than memories, which are temporally limited like the thing itself. Memories that systematically dissipate like a fading jet stream against a clear blue sky.

I started writing this column in 2003. The daughter with the dress was 6 – “almost 7,” as she probably would have said. I thought I knew a lot and had plenty to say, though I had no idea what. Twenty years on, I know both more and less than I believed I did then, and my voice has changed. It has both mellowed and hardened – a contradiction I wouldn't reconcile if I could.

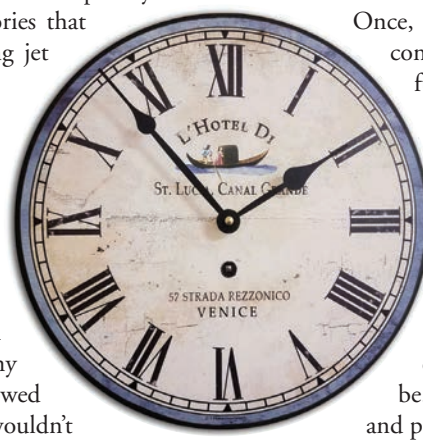
I've enjoyed wins. I've suffered huge losses. I've made colossal mistakes. I've done some very smart things. At times, my actions have caused others pain and discomfort. I've helped people; I've shared insights; I've built things that endure. In some ways, I've grown tremendously; in others, I am probably doomed to remain stubbornly incomplete. If there's a building legacy, it's nothing more than a palliative antidote to time.

If my tone reads sad, it misrepresents the truth: As time advances, so has happiness for me. I have never been

more content than I am right now. I have everything I thought I needed or wanted and more. My girls, about whom I have written (to their shared chagrin) many times, are women, and I see them less often than when we shared a roof. But they are women whom I love deeply. I respect and admire them as much as I love them, which is a subtle gift time gives you while it slowly steals them away.

Once, the obsession with “the dress” was completely foreign to me. What's all the fuss? It's just a collection of white fabric. You wear it once. You could pay a mortgage for a year with what some of them cost. But I think I get it now. It's more than wearable indulgence. It's a marker off to the side of life's long road. It's a monument that will forever stand to that single moment of time that connects what was with what will be. It's white, because life can be messy, and paint will be spilled. There's plenty of time for color, but not on that day when things are perfectly clean.

I haven't seen it yet. I don't want to see it. Not until the day it's meant to be worn. Not until it's time, just before its time has passed.



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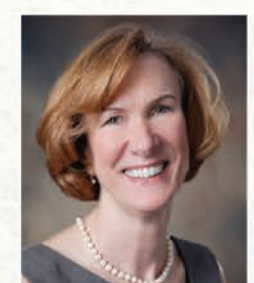
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