

## MATTERS OF TIME

*By Cameron Clay and Dennis Knight*

Baby Lorraine emerged into the world in the final minutes of the year 2013, and two minutes into the year 2014 was born her brother Brandon. They are twins who will never share the same birthday, not even the same birth year. It was a matter of time.

Time is perspective. One day in the life of a mayfly constitutes its entire existence, yet a quahog clam may live five hundred years. That's six times that of a human in Japan, where life spans are the longest, and ten times that of a person in Swaziland, where they are the shortest. If the age of earth was expressed as eighty years, which is the average life of a human, the entire history of Homo sapiens would fill but a single day.

Time is nature. A butterfly's lifespan is less than fifty days, first as the caterpillar that gorges to full maturity, and then wraps itself into a silken chrysalis to cloak its amazing metamorphosis. Days later, it emerges as the fluttering monarch of nature. This morning, our fluttering little beagle nearly snared one of her own, but her timing was just a little off.

Time is physics. It took the genius Albert Einstein to show that if you are in a vehicle going fifty miles per hour, you can't even prove you are moving. It's all relative. Maybe the earth and everything on it but you is moving, and your car is actually moving backwards. They are moving relative to each other, and you determine for yourself the stationary reference. Another way to view Einstein's theory of special relativity is that time runs slower for a moving object, and one traveling through space at the speed of light does not age commensurately with the clock. Taking it all even deeper into the science of black holes and wormholes, even time travel might be possible.

In the late eighteen hundreds, each train station on the line set its clock according to its own high noon. It was a hell of a way to run a railroad. The solution was to divide the globe into twenty-four zones to standardize time and facilitate the publication of schedules.

A farmer measures time by the cycle of crops, scientifically plotting dates to sow, fertilize, and irrigate, and not so scientifically counting on nature's cooperation. An archaeologist measures time in eons, eras, periods and epochs. A doctor sees time in terms of physical development or degeneration, and a nurse records it in terms of a mother's pulse and the moment of a baby's first heartbeat.

Time is concomitant. The single second that marked the end of Mother Teresa's life in 1997 may very well have been the moment that life began somewhere for the one person who will finally fulfill her vision and bring peace to the world.

Time to a dancer or a drummer is measured in rhythmic counts that fit music and motion elegantly into space. Without it, the prima ballerina Anna Pavlova might never have landed, and Glenn Miller might never have found the bottom of his *Little Brown Jug*.