

Life is Circular

By Sheila Johnson

I can still remember waking up to the bright, hot, morning sun that streamed through the partially opened blinds that were veiled by the soft, pink sheers that hung over my bedroom windows in my home town of El Paso, Texas. That was over fifty years ago. In my early childhood, the days were long and hot. There was a lot of laughing, jumping, and running with my hyper brothers, tired parents, and aging grandparents. I had very few responsibilities and always found a way to linger before I entered into a peaceful, dream-filled slumber.

When I entered elementary school I had to balance light household chores, homework, and roller-skating before sunset. In those days, weekends found me counting the hours until bedtime as I was too young to “hang out” with the older kids, and my parents didn’t allow us to have or attend sleepovers. As I moved into my teen years, the days shortened and I yearned for more time with friends, movies, and sports activities. I was allowed to attend skate parties, amusement parks and occasional outings with the local YWCA. I entered college immediately after graduating from high school, and I scrambled to find time to simultaneously navigate my university studies, church, part-time job as a sales clerk, and sleep. Time truly became a premium.

Then life happened with a capital H. An elopement and eventual marriage temporarily interrupted my college education. My young, love struck mind, thought it not robbery to trade mathematics and engineering classes for kisses, hugs, and three children. Fifteen years later, I finished my degree and thought life would at least give me a fifteen-minute break. Not so. My children began to echo their mother’s childhood sentiments: “This day is never going to end.” “I want to stay out longer with my friends.” “College is hard. I don’t have any time to sleep.” “I’m in love.”

That was then—‘in the old days’—as my progeny often say with amusement. I believe that our lives make a complete circle as we travel every one of those 360 degrees gracefully or awkwardly. Because ‘in the now’—another millennial phrase, there are days that feel as though the sun’s orbit is thirty-six hours instead of twenty-four. Yet just last week, I found myself wishing for a few more hours in each day. There are times when my living space is spotless, and other times when I don’t even have time to put the dishes in the dishwasher.

With more years behind me than in front of me, I’m praying that my latter days will equally balance out with peace and grace. Besides, the writer of Ecclesiastes wrote, “Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.” (Eccl 3; 15).