

Slowly summertime slips

Entering middle age during the lazy days of summer doesn't make it happen any slower

For some reason, summers around our homestead tend to be far different than the idyllic lazy days one might wish for. It seems that, inevitably, my wife must work from dawn till dusk on some project, and our children, in tune with nature's rhythm, spring from their beds raring to go at 6 or 7 a.m., and are still brimming with life, if not joy, at 10 p.m. Perhaps it's life's inimitable way of making sure that my wife and I are working equal hours and that I don't just get to shirk off after an early bedtime for the kiddos and laze about reading a murder mystery. Damn.

I just wish there were more time. Days are a prism of friends over for a visit, meals prepared, crises averted, phones answered, pools filled with cold water from the garden hose, groceries bought, errands run, beds made, books read—and then the day is done. The week is done, the month is done, summer is kaput.

What there always seems to be enough time for, though, is reflection. I may not get to think a thought through to its logical conclusion (unless I get out of bed at 5 a.m., as I did today), but there are lots of little moments to think about stuff.

Like the fact that I'm turning 35 in a month.

Which, depending on your perspective, is either: A) "really old, baby, yikes!" or B) "what the hell are you complaining about—I'll never see the other side of 50 again, you know—nothing insolent pup!"

For me, turning 35 feels really big because it's my measure of adulthood. It's one of those thoughts you have as a kid when you lay on a grassy hilltop staring at the clouds. What will I be when I grow up? Where will I live? My gosh, I'll be 35 in the year 2000, I'll be a grown-up. Though I'm not sure I'll ever be an actual grown-up, between the calendar, my hormonal surges, the inevitable pull of gravity and the humbling experience of going to the swimming pool last week, I'm having to face that this is the beginning of middle age.

While I would like to mark the occasion by becoming a born-again fitness fanatic, the reality is it doesn't fit my lifestyle in the least. Life with very young children is an endurance sport all on its own. Sometimes I can get something accomplished, but then one of them pushes the other, or the dog pees in the pool, or my wife calls about something she needs me to do, or our daughter toddles in wanting to know if the spots on her back are the chicken pox. My heavens, I don't even have time to shave my legs, much less try to work out on a regular basis.

It's not all bad. (Though it would be nice to get the left and right leg done on the same day, thereby not causing such rampant speculation at the pool about my ambivalence regarding leg hair.) After all, ideas of happiness change, and I think I'm deciding that not being some mus-

cular babe or ambitious career woman is OK with me.

In fact, when a friend told me last fall, without a hint of tongue in cheek, that to be on the A-list in L.A. you not only have to be gorgeous, young and perfectly fit, but must also have a fantastic career, all I could think was, "Damn, I'm sure glad to be out of that contest." Granted, he was talking about the circuit party scene, which is way beyond my means, lifestyle and gender anyway. But the principle's the same.

Obviously, a little fitness and ambition is a good thing for anybody. And I trust that someday soon there will be hours when the kids are both in school that will allow me to get my bottom in gear and do something bigger than paint a bedroom or scribble out a book review.

Maybe it's having a family that makes the little things look so good, as opposed to trying to write the great American novel. I'm becom-



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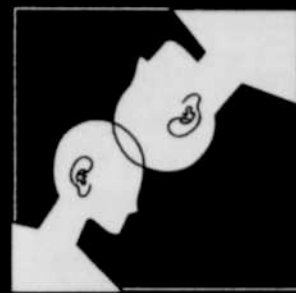
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ing one of those women who love the minutiae of life. By the time I'm an old woman I will delight in a single flower, or sing the praises of a note from a friend for months.

While I'd love to climb a mountain someday, today I'm just going to feed those kids breakfast. Rejoice that the missing gecko has reappeared again happy and healthy. Be grateful that my wife thinks the monkey-and-palm-tree fabric that I picked out for the kitchen is the cat's pajamas. Be glad to have some friends who like us for what we are, good and bad, and not for how we look in a room—which is good because we're not that decorative. And just be darned glad that, no, it wasn't chicken pox.

■ BEREN DEMOTIER is a Portland-based creative writer, lesbian wife and mother of two.

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