

Osher Institute Personal Writing SIG

Jud Roth

Reflections

He had been retired for almost 10 months. To hear him tell it, the whole thing might have been a mistake. However, if one listened closely, you could hear the nuance of adventure in his voice, the beginning of a new life in the making. He had come up with a plan this very day, sitting in his old rocker where if he were not careful, he would spend the day, not dressed except in T-shirt and sweatpants. He hated that part of his lethargy. He despised laziness, in any form, and was quick to condemn himself or others for what he considered sloth (an old word, probably biblical in nature). What he had come up with would rattle his entire concept of how a responsible grown man should act. He would spend money each day on breakfast. Go to a restaurant and eat. It would have to be something his Scot nature would allow, because eating out had always been a reward of sorts (oatmeal would be cheap and good for him), a treat and not something taken lightly. He would have to reconcile spending money on himself, a throw-back to the extremely poor environment he had been raised in. His behavior to date made him realize if he did not eat out each day he would not eat. His current state of mind made it difficult for him to do anything at all in the morning except get out of bed and sit. If he were honest, he would admit getting out of bed each day for the last nine months had been a chore. This very act would become something to look forward to, and he hoped the social aspect would be good for him. All this seemed daunting, for a lot of reasons. He was a very private person. He

had found excuses over the years to avoid social functions. He had a natural aversion to crowds and all the chaos associated with big gatherings of his fellow human beings. He did not like them much, but if he were truthful, he wished to be included at times. His next step would be to go to the library, secret himself in plain view, and write. He could be private there, in public, but quiet. He was finding his habit of writing in a journal and putting words on paper each day for the past 33 years had become a source of relaxation and enjoyment. It was a way of giving something of himself, something lasting, a thing that would endure. His secret hope was to leave his writings to his daughters. To have them enjoy his words, his musings, and hopefully inspire the talent each of them possessed. Next, he would walk in a beautiful park that was situated across from the library. On most days during the week, the length of his walk increased because he now had the time to immerse himself in it. The park was lightly used, mostly by transients, the unemployed, and others like himself who had nothing to do and had found it a relaxing way to exercise. His next step was still in the making. Maybe he would go back to the library or the gym. It would be nice to get back into the habit of lifting weights, at least two days per week. This plan suited him and his sensibilities. He would begin in two days, on Friday, February 13, 2015. What a day to begin, Friday the 13th. He had nothing more to do today but sit and write.

Disposable

In loving memory of my grandfather, (AEA) Andy Earl Allen

It was all so damned sterile, so disposable: the water cups, the food trays, the plastic utensils, the covers of the needles that gave the shots, the containers that held the throw-away paper products, the green booties that covered the thick-soled, silent shoes; and when the clock struck a certain time, the current people would leave and be replaced by others, just like the ones who had left. The only non-disposable thing in that room was my grandfather. As it turned out, he was disposable too.

I Wonder What Happened to Sunday

Sunday used to be lazy, predictable, fun. Filled with church, grandma and grandpa, bees on the dandelions in the hot hay fields, being careful of the bull, who was very protective of his territory, and learning to smoke Camel straights in the back of a two-horse trailer. Sunday was dinner, a nap when I was younger and needed one, and a warm wash rag to wash off the dirt and dust before going back to church on Sunday night.

Now, well, Sunday is when my girls go back to their mother's house.

It is wandering around an empty house trying to fill the evening with some kind of busy work, waiting for the girls to call and say goodnight.

Sunday arrives too quickly and lasts too long.

I don't like Sunday anymore.