

9-27-19 The Nows

I thought of Emily Dickinson over the weekend. A few days earlier I gave my daughter a gift with a card that quoted her, “Forever is composed of nows.” Inside the card read “Congratulations on your beautiful now.”

The card foretold so much about my daughter’s wedding, more than I had realized at the time of its giving.

I met my most recent grandchild for the first time. He was born five weeks earlier in Alaska. When he smiles, he flares his nostrils just like my son! My heart melted.

Friends arrived from near and far to help the day the before and morning of the backyard wedding. They cared enough to fly in from Liberia, California, and Oregon. A mother of three, with the youngest only months old cared enough to drive from Connecticut. Some saved money and stayed close by staying at Airbnb’s just down the street. They arranged flowers, sliced limes and made guacamole and placed tiny lights in clear glass bottles.

The flowers arrived the day before, shipped from Sam’s Club. Being thrifty runs in our blood. They cost a fraction of what a florist would have charged, and they were so beautiful! We cut off the bottom of the stems and placed them in buckets of water to stay fresh until the next day. Friends cut and arranged the flowers, making a lovely mess all over the kitchen island and floor. It looked like confetti and was quickly swept up.

We washed windows and arranged lights in the trees. Tissue paper pom poms were fluffed open from their folded beginning and ended up looking like large peony flowers. They were tied onto the hanging branches of the black tupelo tree, with their shiny green leaves and tiny blue berries. A few leaves were turning orange and red. I recalled these trees from my childhood fishing trips with my father. I did not know then that one day my daughter would be married in front of a tupelo tree with a wedding arch of paper flowers. It became another beautiful moment of many nows.

Enjoying the here and now is a public health goal. It rests the soul and calms the nerves.

There were more obvious, typical and very relevant public health moments also. Insect repellent was left out for the guests and I smiled seeing so much use of it and friends helping others to get sufficiently sprayed. I did not have to tell anyone about mosquitoes and EEE. They knew. Whew!

A bright young man, now my daughter's brother-in-law, told me of one of the reasons why he changed from one college to another. He is majoring in finance and real estate. His accounting teacher was explaining that their accounts could be named for any sort of business. His examples were heroin and cocaine. Just give those accounts a name, was his advice. This was upsetting to the young man, as he had lost a cousin to a heroin overdose only a month earlier. He brought the situation to the head of the department, who agreed it was unnecessary and inappropriate. The teacher may not have understood the effect of his words, but he was required to change them. I understood this young man's sensitivity to certain words and empathized with him and thanked him for speaking up. I am sure his actions helped others as well. A moment for me and a moment in the telling.

Another young man in attendance was there to see my daughter, his beloved Joanna. His name is Sean and he is autistic. He has a gift for superlatives and is very charming. He uses words like impressive and magnificent and he has learned that a lifting of his sunglasses to reveal his left eye winking will immediately win over people. In case the wink was missed, he usually announces, "Wink!"

I asked Sean, "You love Joanna, don't you?" He nodded his head. His aunt said he was learning to share. Sean repeated her words as he nodded his head, "Yes, learning to share." After a lengthy visit with my daughter alone and then with her and her husband and many photos of them together, he seemed convinced that Joanna was happy and that he was pleased for her and he now had a new friend in her husband. No loss; definitely a gain!

Emily Dickinson also said, "We turn not older with years, but newer every day." Well, Emily, parts of me felt old after the wedding. My feet hurt from heels and my arthritic thumbs hurt from helping with arrangements, but those pains are temporary. I also recognized the newness. So many news and so many nows! And all because of two people's vows.

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