

Taking It on the Wrist

When she wears hers, it's always on her left wrist.
Mine is on my right and it never comes off. Unless I lose it.
The first one was doomed from the start.
It was purchased and gifted with love, only to disappear.
But it was found, repurposed to live my right wrist. Until it wasn't.
The new one carries forth the same purpose, always on my right wrist.

I was new to this whole wedding traditions thing. I was 41, being wed for the first time with a woman I consider my best friend, confidant, love, and light of my life. I considered that all I had to do was show up, look the part of a groom in control, say "I do" when asked by the priest, and that would be a wrap. Nope.

"You need to get her a wedding day gift," I was told. Not enough that I proposed, and she said yes. "What? Wait. Why?" were each my insightful questions.

"Is she special to you? Do you cherish her and the thought of marrying her? Being married for eternity with her, to her, supporting her emotionally, physically, spiritually til death?" My response: "I just want to marry her, like I asked."

"You are so naïve."

I shopped for and found a simple, thin, braided, shiny, gold bracelet that she could slip onto her thin, soft, beautiful wrist. It came with a small, flat box. Giving it her on our wedding day brought out her wonderous smile and the sparkle in her eyes. She cried.

The pencil-thin bracelet sparkled on her wrist after I graciously accepted her offer that I place it on her left wrist. It would quickly become part of her wardrobe of baubles to which we add much more over the decades. I was so naïve.

Not even months later, on a workday morning, at o'dark-thirty, I heard her exclaim a scream from our master bathroom. Her face buried in the bathroom sink of our small condominium, her hands clasping the sink's side, her breath fast and heavy, was the sight I witnessed. "It's gone!" She exclaimed, looking at me, her desperation sinking into her visage. "My bracelet, dummy! It went down the sink. Without my permission!"

Later retelling this disaster at work, to my cohort and close friend, we conjured up the appropriate plan of action: we went to the same jewelry store, found a close cousin of the original bracelet, and a few nights later I quietly slipped on her left wrist on our way out the door to a semi-formal affair we were to attend. Smiling sweetly, I a gasp, a hug, a kiss, another hug, and the thrust of her left arm, the wrist in the lead, showing me, I had made the correct save. She even left out part where she asked about the cost. I was so naïve.

A couple of weeks later, while I was at work, she stayed home from work that morning to meet the plumber to address an issue we had with the condo plumbing, after which she went to her work. That night, when we sat down to dine on what we had prepared for our dinner, she recounted her plumbing appointment experience. Asked if it was possible that the lost bracelet could still be in the bathroom pipes, the plumber responded, that yes, there is that chance, showing her the u-shaped portion of the plumbing under the bathroom sink. With that, she produced the lost bracelet, inquiring about what she should do, now that she had two. She was so naïve.

“I’ll wear it,” I replied after a moment’s thought. I have a man’s wrists thin enough, yet different from hers, that a thin, braided bracelet would not stand out as it does on hers. “I’ll wear it on my right wrist to balance our wedding band I wear on my left hand. Like my ring, it will never be taken off, reminding me of you, always.” And my right wrist is where it stayed for over a decade. Until I didn’t.

My recollection that I was never asked about the bracelet remains. It was usually on the upper side of the watch of the day, or ensconced under a long-sleeved shirt. My surmise is with the passing of time, the bracelet’s shine dulled, the precious metal blending over my tanned forearm. I never tired of its feel against my skin, knowing that it existed, always reminding me of her.

I don’t know when the bracelet disappeared nor where it went. All I know is that over a decade later, on a warm day’s run, I suddenly realized that the soft feel on my skin from the bracelet bouncing against my running watch was absent. Stopping mid-stride, I took a glance, acknowledging the bracelet was missing. Old enough to know that searching for it on this run was fruitless, I carried on. Looking for it at home was equally pointless, though I searched for months. Silently, I mourned its loss. Sometime later, she did ask about the bracelet, but no more was said.

Life moves forward. I am now wiser, simply older. With my aging has come low testosterone and its effects. Okay, and from my five decades of running, comes low testosterone. I am not going to argue who came first much less whether age or the running caused the issue. The fact that blood testing demonstrated low red blood cell count, increased blood glucose levels, etcetera, should be a sufficient response to the debate.

What was most drastic was the precipitous and rapid decline in my energy level, demonstrated in the ever-slowng paces of my runs. That a runner's pace slows with age misses the point. That a runner with testosterone levels well below normal finds he cannot run without walking and that the walking portion of the run is done at a faster pace than the running pace is the point. He finds himself alone amidst other groups of runners on the path. He is alone with his thoughts. Those thoughts are unpleasant to a runner who looks forward in planning his runs, his running routes, his paces in carrying out the planned run on that running route on that day.

The day before I met with my doctor, I planned and carried out the most ridiculous run I could not have ever imagined. Running for three minutes, walking for a minute, for eight miles, around a mile-long oval walking path at a local park. The mid-winter day was bitter cold, the cold exasperated by the more bitterly cold north wind. No one else chose to brave the day at the park. My pace was slow in the beginning mile, slower in the ensuing miles, each segment run during each mile slower than the one just prior, the walking breaks steady in pace, disheartening to my runner's psyche. The experience was awful.

Resolved to continue running, I resigned myself to a future of being that old man running in the park, running at a pace and in a form resembling Frankenstein running on a good day. My choice was clear: run or don't. In life's many opportunities, not making a choice is the choice made. Does one engage in the effort in taking the opportunity or does one refuse the proposal presented. My life is replete with understanding that not every opportunity has a positive result. But, choosing is living and living is a grand aspect of my life. Even at a slug's pace, the attempt in running outweighs bon bons and beer while viewing television.

The combination of blood testing results being so far below normal that the results could not be located on the charted for the various ranges considered normal, led to my medical team conferring with one another, that confab leading to something I'd

only barely heard, TRT. In recounting this to our son, he joyously laughed at my expense, “the juice! You’re going on the juice! You’re gonna become Superman with all that energy.” Then he paused, offering that “you know you’ll be on that for the rest of your life.” “Just how long do you think is the rest of my life?” I nailed him, leaving him to ponder that answer.

So, I am on the juice, a really low dosage level of the juice, taking through injection a drug I cannot pronounce, much less spell, once every week for as many weeks in the years and decades that remain. Just three weeks into this medical process new to me, I notice no change and yet, I notice the beginnings of tremendous changes. Normal. I feel normal, as if my physiological system woke up, quietly went about its business, discovering long, forgotten machine parts that had been cast aside. Nothing more than finding my day is a bit brighter because I am no longer dragging a heavy anchor that only I can feel.

The return of normalcy was the first noticed effect. The most dramatic was my first run following the first injection. Placing my toes into the water, as it were, to simply run at a runner’s pace for a runner my age, without having to walk, was all the opportunity I sought. I did it. Eight miles on a running route I’ve run weekly for over a decade. I ran it solo. The quiet part was to run the route in mile splits that were below my truly awful slow 12:00 per mile pace and that each mile was faster than the one just prior to it. That quiet part was accomplished.

That run has been followed by other runs with equally as modest immediate goals. I just want to run like a runner, feel as if I am running like a runner, that I look like I am running like a runner. I also want life to continue in a positive direction and world peace but those for another day. I want to run alongside my running companions on our weekend run. That want requires more time with the therapy. Reveling in my renewed enjoyment in running is good unto itself. Me. I run. I enjoy running, cherishing the feeling of running.

And on each run, there is on my right wrist, semi-tucked into my running watch, my simple, thin, braided, shiny, gold bracelet that she lovingly found and gifted me. Jauntily bouncing along for the ride, it weighs nothing, bringing a simple quiet joy to my existence. So, which came first: the renewed running success or the bracelet. What I do know is that I am no longer naïve. Maybe just a little.