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So be it!

by Howard Meharg



OK, so my arms were not long enough to get the newspaper far enough from my face so I could read the newspaper. Glasses? No big deal. Bifocals? Oh, all right, I can deal with that...albeit with considerable grumping around about getting used to them.

But now there's this other thing! People just don't talk as plainly as they used to. What ever happened to teaching public speakers how to enunciate? Don't they know how to spit out those consonant sounds? And then there's television...especially the "West Wing." They talk fast and mumble. My wife walks in the room from the other side of the house and says, "Why do you

have the TV turned up so loud?" "Well, duh...these actors don't know how to speak clearly!"

Choirs? Final consonants seem to be a thing of the past. What's wrong with these directors nowadays, don't college conductors teach the basics of diction?

My wife, Karen is not one to beat around the bush. "You should have a hearing aid!" "What are you suggesting," I argue, "at the age of 65, I should have an ear ring made...that's the silliest thing I've ever heard of...I can't imagine..." She interrupts with what I think was a shout, "No, a HEARING AID!"

For months this went on...she talking softly to aggravate me; I, aggravating her by constantly asking her to repeat things. Then, one Sunday at church my daughter-in-law sang a solo. I couldn't understand a word she sang. I wanted to chide her that her normally fine singing diction needed some work. But somehow I knew this was not the problem. Monday I had my hearing checked. Verification! The higher frequencies were dropping off enough to lose those consonant sounds. Oh, my God!

We think nothing of wearing glasses. Even kids sometimes have need of vision correction. My dad had hearing aids. He was old. I now have a hearing aid. I must be old. This is somehow more than getting a little "hearing correction." This is BIG. Frankly, this literally caused some mild depression for me. It was verification of what I was seeing in the mirror and trying to deny.

Naturally I went straight to my priest. Big help there. “Yep,” he says, “I’m beginning to feel more aches and pains myself...and I’m only 55. Time surely does fly, doesn’t it?”

As I drove away from the church I turned on the radio. Garrison Keillor was quoting the poet Robert Bly, who had written about the “great Amen,” or “So Be It.” He had written:

*If a young boy leaps over seven hurdles in a row,
And an instant later is an old man reaching for his cane,
To the swiftness of it all we have to say "Amen."*

Time surely does fly, doesn’t it? Hey, relax...say “Amen.” Some things have to be accepted with “so be it,” albeit, in my case, with considerable grumping around about getting used to it.