

# Editor's Perspective



By Michael L. Sensor, Esquire

## Renewal

**A**s I write this in late October, the last gasps of summer are sounding: a faint cricket's chirp here, a warm afternoon there. But, for the most part, the book has been closed on that season, as pumpkins and cardboard spiders take the place of beach chairs and sunglasses. Yet, as the fall settles in, and we become accustomed to seeing the Phillies in the World Series, I can't help but see this as a time of renewal. The wind blows pure, cold, and clear, the trees shed their leaves, plants die or retreat into the ground until the next spring, and animals prepare to hibernate. Everything becomes a blank slate.

October may sound like a strange time to think of renewal and rebirth. But, it is the last month of the old Celtic calendar. And, the end of the Celtic year was what we now know as Halloween: Samhain, the night of all souls. While that celebration has been deprecated into the kids' candy-and-silliness feast we now observe, the sentiment behind the concept is still very real.

The problem with human beings is, unlike a calendar, we don't regenerate from year to year. We, and those we love, age and change. And, if we don't pay close enough attention, we run the risk of letting those changes get ahead of us. To use an overworn, but pithy saying, "Blink and you'll miss it."

This summer, my parents celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary at my brother's house in central Pennsylvania. "Forty years?" I kept muttering to myself as my wife and I sped down Interstate 80: "Forty years!" I couldn't quite fathom how it came to pass that my parents had been married that long. I still remember quite well my grandparents' 45th wedding an-

niversary celebration when I was not even yet a teenager, so where did the time go?

Thinking about it as we crossed the Susquehanna River, it became quite clear indeed where the time went. Almost 13 years of practicing law, preceded by three years of law school, four years of college, and four years of high school—all of which are still in my recent memory—accounts for nearly a quarter-century of my own life, gone before I even realized it. But, the passage of time didn't really hit me until my wife and I gathered with my parents and other relatives for the celebratory weekend, when I saw just how many things had changed: uncles older and grayer, cousins middle-aged with kids, and brothers with families of their own. Although it was a joy to be with so many family members I hadn't seen for years, I was still filled with a deep sense of sadness, borne from the knowledge that the relatives I remembered from childhood were slowly but inexorably aging, and there was nothing I could do to relive those days.

Nostalgia for one's childhood may be the first sign of the onset of middle age, and perhaps that's what I was experiencing. But, something more profound was at play, something deeper than a mere yearning for days past. I had a sense that not only was my childhood gone, but that I would forget what it was like to be a child and have those wonderful people in my life.

Shortly before departing for home on the last day of the celebration/reunion, I took some photos of our family, one of which featured the old standard of family reunions: oldest member/youngest member. My 92-year-old Uncle Donald (see "The Farm," August 2008 Editor's

Perspective) and his 10-month-old great grand-niece, my goddaughter Molly, got together in one memorable frame.

It took seeing them together for me to realize that neither human existence nor society are linear, proceeding unimpeded from A to B with no change. The actual picture is far more complex—and cyclical. Uncle Donald came of age in a time which was fundamentally different from ours: a booming economy, followed by a crash, on the heels of a large and expensive war which ousted a dictator from power.

Perhaps it wasn't so different from our times after all, now that I think about it. Molly, too, has been born into a time that's just as uncertain as Uncle Donald's childhood in the 1920s. She will have her own crises to weather, her own still-unwritten story to tell to her children, nieces, and great-nephews. And, so the human story continues, person after person, life after life.

As the wind blows and my outdoor thermometer dips below 40 degrees, dead leaves rustle in the yard, and the heater kicks in. The earth prepares to bare itself to the cold of winter. I think of my relatives and the lives they have lived—and have yet to experience. October nears its end, the tablet is clean, the pencil sharpened, and another story is ready to be written. ☪