

## 83 (2013)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner on WLRH, Huntsville, AL USA

Let me tell you: being 83 is a two-edged sword. Two edges? Dang, there's a new edge every time you turn the corner. I mean "limp around the corner;" there's a new blessing or curse.

There's a lot that's like growing up and getting paid for it -- there's purported wisdom, and the lure of having some; there's respect, and getting to move up in line, and discounts at the grocery store. One of the biggest perks is not having to do stuff you had to do when you were younger, like work 8 hours a day, or maybe 12, or 20, if you were on a roll and things were hopping. All that's well and good.

But then there's the drag, the necessity of coming to like the unimaginable, just sitting there in bliss, or in a stupor. Or actually enjoying not preaching, when you're a preacher. Nothing works; someone said everything's wet that ought to be dry, and vice versa. 83 is like having a second job, with medical stuff and forgetting it, and having to write everything down and forgetting to look at the note, and besides, not being able to read your own writing. It's having young people of fifty or sixty pass you when you're out for your evening walk as if you were loafing, when you're at top speed... and then hearing, "Good evening, sir," as they whiz by.

It's not dying I'm afraid of; once more than half the people you love have already crossed that river, you get the idea you can do it pretty well, when the time comes; it's the coming apart, bit by bit, one function at a time. I watched it with my dear mother, as she lost the things she valued most, starting with her beloved knitting and her ability to snap through the crossword puzzles and play a cutthroat game of duplicate bridge; now I'm there, and have to work to do what once was easy, natural, simple, like breathing out and breathing in. Keep on chugging, HH. Chugging. Chugging.

— Houston Hodges  
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