

Time Slows Down in the Zone

Dr. Peter Krey: July 26, 2008 at 7:33 am

Once in training for Cincinnati Vacation Church School and Day Camp (1969 or 1970), one of the counselors said, “Hey!” – standing up in one motion and very pronunciation of the word. His whole body was one with his instantaneous expression. Ever after watching his whole body standing right up in his word, I have had an appreciation for spontaneity.

I think the fellow was in a zone, because a body could not move that fast in ordinary time. I’ve known for a long time that we can make time go fast. Andrew Marvel’s poem “To his Coy Mistress” ends

Thus though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.¹

That happens when we are really into something, having a good conversation, or experiencing something we like very much. But after reading W. Timothy Gallwey’s book, The Inner Game of Tennis,² I’ve now discovered that we can make time go slowly, when we get into the zone.

Gallwey notes that there are 1,000 milliseconds in a second, when you are completely focused in the now (page 95). He also reports how Bill Russell described playing in the zone with the Boston Celtics. It was as if they were playing in slow motion (page 99). He could sense where every play would develop before it happened and felt that he not only knew every one of the Celtics players by heart, but even the opposing players, knowing what each would do. “We can be focused. We can be conscious.” he said (Page 99). At that special level, the milliseconds fill our now and it is not as if a short second goes right by.

I remember the slow-motion picnic in the movie, Bonnie and Clyde, especially because I experienced time changing into slow motion on the last day of one of our Vacation Church School Day Camps, when the children were playing king-of-the-mountain in the sand dunes of Jones Beach. We were grilling sloppy Jo’s, eating together, and feeding the children. When they started to play in the dunes, suddenly everything went into slow motion. I don’t think I was the only one who experienced it, because usually the bus drivers would push to beat the traffic home, counselors wanted to get the children back in the buses to get off. Suddenly everything went into what to me seemed like the transfiguration of our whole group, until time came back to its normal pace, and we all set about our chores to get the camp back to Coney Island.

¹ C.F. Main and Peter J. Seng Poems: Wadsworth Handbook & Anthology, (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.1961), p. 323.

² W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis: the Classic Guide to the Mental Side of Peak Performance, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 1974-2008), 95 and 99.