



## One Block of Time

**I** have a manual, wooden calendar on my kitchen windowsill. Each morning, I physically pick up and turn the blocks to set the correct date. I enjoy keeping it current. It's a simple part of my morning ritual.

For most of the month of August, my calendar sat unchanged ... no apologies offered and no reminders given.

Time, for me, came to stop on the night of August 3, with the news that my dad, Chuck Hanes, had been killed in a tragic work accident. By the following evening, I was in Rapid City, South Dakota, doing things that other, stronger people do ... like changing my Dad's answering machine message (he ran a business), writing his obituary, and accepting sympathy – and, of course, food – from friends near and far. In that subdued environment, surrounded by family, it was appropriate and comforting to focus on Dad and happy memories.

Dad died just a few days shy of his 61st birthday. He was multitalented, easy to be with and simple in his approach to life. He loved his family, preached the Bible, and found joy in various outdoor hobbies. He had a particular knack for restoring vintage tractors, and, in much the same way, people. Upon his death, so many of his friends – some just mere acquaintances – shared with my family or me some little thing that Dad did or said to ease their burden or otherwise encourage them.

### *A grown daughter allows herself time to remember a loving father*

BY CASEY L. PENN

Up to and during the funeral, time moved in slow motion, but soon after, its stingy nature was apparent once again. Within a few days, my family and I had travelled home to Arkansas. School was back in session and my morning ritual reinstated.

Coffee? Check. Calendar?

Whoa. It took me by surprise how it felt like a fresh wound. There it was, on my kitchen windowsill, declaring the date Aug 3. How could I be expected to merely reach out and change the date? Furthermore, how could life move on so quickly after what had just happened?

Life did move on, regardless. Morning by morning, I stared at that clock, and it stared back. August 15 went by ... August 20 and so on. Now and then, I picked up a block to change the date, only to put it down again unchanged.

I began to realize that while life had started back all around me, I was as stuck as those two little wooden blocks

that felt so heavy in my hands. I think the problem was that for me, changing the date symbolized acceptance of life without my dad.

On September 3, I gained the courage to set things right. I changed the date, and I changed my focus to my family. To help with my grief, I began reaching out to dear friends, drawing strength from a sibling's presence or just sharing a memory with one of my girls. I also began writing about Dad – his life, his humor and the many things he taught me.

I can't say it was rational to wage a silent war, from my own kitchen, against the passage of time. I can say that it turned out to be my way of quietly realizing that I need to take time to grieve. After all, what is rational about dealing with great loss? We all grieve differently. For me, it seems to be a tendency toward stillness and a yearning to stop time and go back to those days spent with my dad.

I can't stop time, but I've learned that it's okay to steal a block of it now and then to pause and remember. So sometimes, when it's just me, I sit down with my calendar, set it back to Aug 3, and just stop for a moment to be sad, happy or even joyful in some memory of my dad. ♦

Casey L. Penn is the boss lady at Pennwords Writing & Design. She juggles work, family, faith and friendships and yet still entertains thoughts of blogging, singing and fiddle playing. Her beautiful family puts up with her shenanigans without necessarily participating in them. Find Casey at [pennwords.com](http://pennwords.com) and "like" her at Facebook. [com/PennwordsCP](http://com/PennwordsCP).