



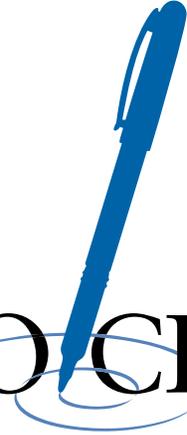
About the Author

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About Vintage Voice

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VINTAGE VOICE



Not Merely Standing and Waiting

By the Rev. Stewart Pierson

The concert series board meeting adjourned at 6PM. I gathered up my papers and walked to the parking garage. Before starting the engine, I wrote on the agenda the number of times I spoke at that meeting. I had started doing this a year earlier. At most meetings I spoke only once: to move the approval of the minutes. The same was true at this recent meeting.

I am a classical music lover and over many years have found attending concerts a sheer delight. I am also an extravert and enjoy the give-and-take of board meetings. This board was a perfect fit for me.

But something changed.

Certainly hearing loss has contributed (even with hearing aids). If I miss one word of a person's comment and lose the entire thought, I am unable to make an intelligent response. Those occasional times when I do hear everything, the content is completely strange as modern music is discussed. When we discuss publicity or modern technology such as the internet or Facebook, I have no experience to add.

So I ask myself: "Why am I here?"

I am here because I like the people and love the music. My contributions are limited to working on phonathons or baking brownies for concert receptions, completely different than providing insights into which of the Beethoven Opus 59 string quartets would be appropriate.

Diminishing participation is becoming the reality of my days. I no longer "fit in" where I used to. As the youngest of four children, meal time was often the time when I did not "fit in." Now, while everyone else might be discussing "lobbies," I envisioned entry halls to public buildings, but nothing being said concerned entryways. "What are you talking about?" I would whisper into the kindly older ear next to me. She understood my confusion about "lobby" and explained it. The difference between not "fitting in" as a child and not fitting in as a septuagenarian is enormous. The child is

growing towards involvement and accomplishment in the game. The septuagenarian is pointed toward the locker room and the grandstands to watch the game.

I have considered discussing my feelings of growing uselessness with fellow board members. I know they would brush me off. “You contribute more than you realize,” I would be told. I know this is true. So it is to my aging self that I must accommodate.

When I first retired at age 61, peers protested: “Before retirement, I was never this busy.” Seventeen years later when I read *The Vintage Voice*, I am meeting the “young old” still on the playing fields even if the title “rector” has become “interim” or “Sunday supply” or “priest in partnership.” My age peers are moving towards the locker rooms and grandstands, and weekly calendars are emptying.

There is a line of poetry which repeats itself in the background of my mind as I write: “He also serves who only stands and waits.” I was surprised to learn that John Milton composed this quote at the conclusion of his sonnet, “On My Blindness.” Standing and waiting is a transitional activity as we move from one competency to a new one. At first I feel sorry for myself but then a new “calling” comes to consciousness as I “only stand and wait.” Last weekend I joined a work crew building a new bridge over a stream. Two years ago I heaved heavy timbers and was quick with helpful technical advice. This year I am no longer strong enough to heave timbers nor involved enough to give good advice, so I withdraw and sit by the trail side watching and cheering. Then I notice the need to clean up the work site and organize a pizza break for lunch.

John Milton “only stood and waited” while the darkness of his sight loss enveloped him. In no way did his life end. A new chapter began.

So much more yet to be learned before this journey ends.

