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We grow daily,
as we die.

Elizabeth Bugental
(1926-2009)

THE 87TH SPRING

I had been sitting on the Haiku Bench watching a newborn lizard exploring his environment. The young woman who sat down beside me was not someone I knew well but she seemed likable and a very curious 20-something. Then came the question,

What does it feel like to be watching your 87th Spring?

There was a minor explosion in my brain! It was a good question but it set off a broad spectrum of emotions. I suddenly felt very alone.

So many of my precious companions had crossed over the river of life. There was one person in particular with whom I had traveled for over half a century. She was the one that joyfully pointed the first bee on the rosemary, the first flower blooming, the first beautiful squash blossom opening. There is a youth in the first of the seasons and it brings out the young person that never grows old in each of us. But for that youthfulness to come forth, I often need a nudge from someone with whom I have laughed and cried on this strange and twisted pilgrimage of life.



I enjoy the warmth and the beauty of the spring. It also brings me outside of myself. At some point I will exit this scene and, except for those who love me deeply, my absence will be barely noticed. The same will be true with you. Assuming that we do not continue to harm the earth, the magnificent spring display will go on without us. I'm often reminded of that song in "*My Fair Lady*" when Eliza Doolittle tells off Professor Henry Higgins:

*There'll be spring every year without you!
England still will be here without you
There'll be fruit on the tree
And a shore by the sea
There'll be crumpets and tea without you!*

It's important for each of us to remember that from time to time! However my young friend is laughing because she never saw "*My Fair Lady*" and wants to know the story. Oh well, singing on the Haiku Bench sort of fits in with spring!



"OPA! OPA!" That is what my five-year-old grandson Damien calls me. *"I just saw a yellow butterfly. He was all yellow. Yellow all over!"* My first thought was that I had never considered the gender of a butterfly. Next, Damien was bringing up my walker and, after waving goodbye to my bench mate, he and I went on a quest for the yellow butterfly, with Damien traveling much faster than me. I was looking up but he was scanning the world at his eye level and sure enough we found the yellow butterfly again. He or she was flying around a bright colored flower. I suggested to Damien that there might be other new things to discover.



We started out by being quiet and listening to the sounds of birds. Soon he was distinguishing one bird song from another. Then we went over to a fallen log and looked around its shadows where Damien discovered many little plants beginning to grow. I resisted the temptation to make any profound statements. Besides, by this time Damien had taken the lead in our adventure. He was fascinated by the hundreds of tiny white flowers on the Manzanita bushes. Most of the year these bushes are rather drab but just for this short time they flower beautifully. Then we were in the greenhouse looking at the sprouting plants. Damien was guessing at what they would be like when they were full-grown and in the garden. And I was quietly guessing what he would be like

when he was full-grown!

Seeing spring through the eyes of a five-year-old is a really remarkable experience. With some reluctance I turned him over to his father, who was coming up the hill looking for him. As they left, I could hear Damien going on about things he saw including the yellow butterfly. I suppose I really ought to look up the gender of a butterfly.

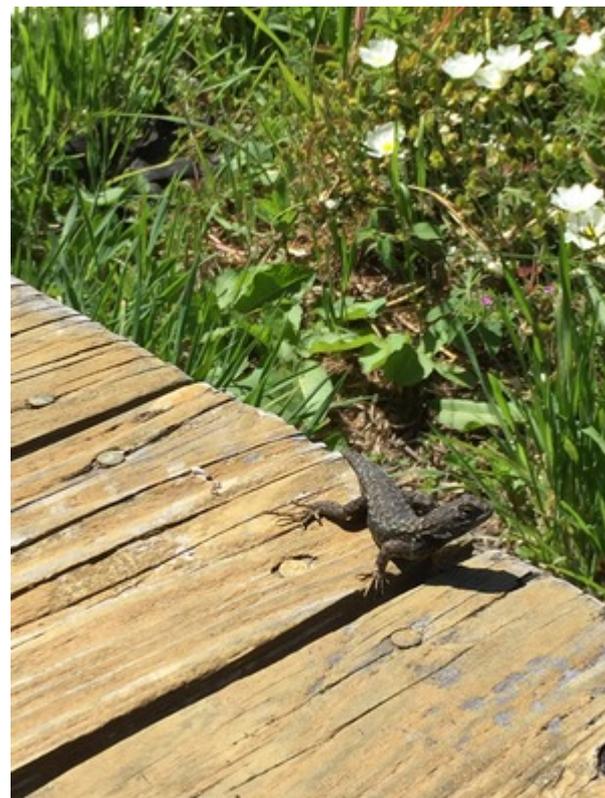


As I make my way up the path to the Chapel, I see a number of little lizards. Their official name is "*Coast Range Fence Lizards*" but that seems completely inappropriate for these small creatures. In the middle of a hot day they can often be found stretched out asleep on a rock, which makes them easy prey for birds flying by. Years ago, I started the practice around the Chapel of disturbing their rest and watching them scurry off to some safe place. As a result, at least I think this is true, we have many more lizards in the chapel area than any other place at Starcross. It is not at all unusual for a curious lizard to wander into the Chapel during a service if we leave the door open.

Sitting on a bench outside the Chapel, I find myself staring at a lizard who is on the railing staring at me. There is a possibility that we are each wondering what the other is thinking about the spring season that is bursting around us.

In Asian places, we often find statues of lions or other powerful creatures guarding sacred spaces. Here at Starcross, our sacred space is guarded by lizards! I should admit that my perspective is not shared by everyone here.

Although the days are warm, the nights can still be cold. I worry if baby lizards can find appropriate shelter. Then it occurs to me that lizards have been on the earth for millions of years, so I could probably find something else to worry about!





In the meantime, I see a young lizard carefully watching the top of a dandelion as it breaks through the earth. That's a good thought to hold in my mind as I go into the Chapel for evening Vespers.

Brother Toby

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