

Efficiency
by Victoria Safford

One morning, on my way to a monthly professional meeting, I was companioned on the southbound highway by a man in a pickup truck who was brushing his teeth as he drove. He was in the fast lane, I was in the other one, and we both were traveling at about sixty-five miles an hour.

During 'sharing time' with my colleagues, I confessed that this metaphor is an apt one for me in the fall: compared with the real (or imagined) lethargy of summer, September is the fast lane. Suddenly there are deadlines again, lots of them, and appointments and events. School starts, everyone leaves for college, and for some reason every major road and artery downtown is being repaved at once. It's a time of year when, if you want your teeth brushed at all, you'd better do it while doing something else of equal import; it's a time of year when the sound of typing fills the background of telephone calls because the person on the other end is writing letters or answering email while we talk.

I understand the impulse and I deeply sympathize (after all, I was finishing a muffin in my lap when my hygienic fellow traveler passed me on the highway), but I know that brushing while you drive is bad religion. Doing almost any two things at once, in the same moment, is bad religion. RUSHING is bad religion.

And so, as the leaves turn and the apples ripen, I resolve again to NOTICE, and bid you notice, too.

I resolve again to go more slowly, to do one thing and then another, to watch the sky and hear the geese and greet them, as I do every soul I meet, one by one by one by one...

There are hawks to see now on the southbound side, and sumac flaming red; there are skinks, porcupines, the shadows of deer and the tender fog that hugs our mountains, just off the exit heading west.

I will brush my teeth some other time.