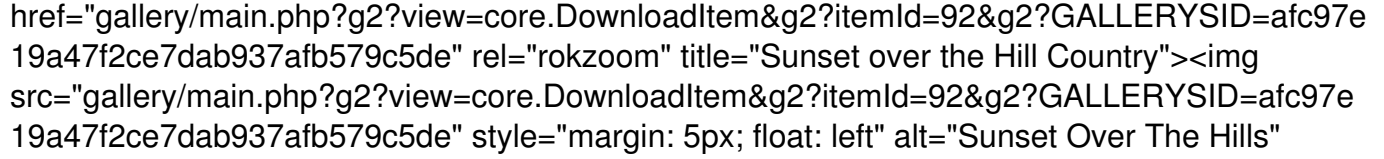


lit's January 1 and I was thinking that it might be a good idea to start the year on the right foot ... so let's just say that it's going to be Mighty Fine in Oh-Nine. I like the optimism that the phrase holds.

It is the Year of the Ox (not quite such an appealing title), though it does represent a [sign of prosperity through fortitude and hard work](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ox?(zodiac) "The Ox")... so I guess I can go with it. It is also the International Year of Reconciliation, so I guess that's a positive as well. Oh, and let us not forget it's the beginning of President Obama's first term in office - which does seem to have the feeling of hope attached to it.

[Sunset over the Hill Country](gallery/main.php?g2?view=core.DownloadItem&g2?itemId=92&g2?GALLERYSID=afc97e19a47f2ce7dab937afb579c5de "Sunset over the Hill Country")The passage of time ... oh how our perspective on this changes with age.

When I was a child, it always seemed like it was an eternity before the first snowfall, or my birthday, or Christmas, or the first summer day. Time would just drag by, slow as molasses in January (ever tried pouring molasses in January in Canada? I rest my case). But I can also remember my mother once telling me that I shouldn't be concerned, because as I got older, time would go by faster, so fast in fact that I would want it to slow down. I can also remember thinking that was just crazy talk from an adult.

I was wrong. Mom was right - no questions asked.

It seems like it all goes by so fast - and hard as it is to believe, faster by the moment. There are so many things to do in life, so many things to explore and to learn. In our digital era, we are inundated with information. At times, we feel like we are in the left hand lane of the digital superhighway, when data and events and moments just fly by without even having a moment to breathe.

And in the midst of all the data, we are invariably faced with - distractions. These are the things that tap our energy. I will be the first to note that I get caught up in distractions as easily as the next guy. It's easy to find yourself in the midst of "mind candy", stuff that is simply "occupying time" and though perhaps tasty and enjoyable, it may in fact be "empty calories" when it comes to the "big picture of life". Lo and behold, you may even pay the price in a loss of mental clarity, added frustration, or diminishing health.

One thing I discovered when I was training for Ironman - and that is the peace of truly being "one with yourself". Even in the toughest challenges, it had an almost zen-like quality. It is truly about "being". I know what that feels like - so I know when I am stepping away from it as well.

Admittedly, I am also getting older. I'm certainly not "old" by any definition but there comes a time when you start to realize your own mortality. Perhaps a friend or mentor passes away. Or you hear a song and realize how long ago it was when you first heard it. And it could even be someone remarking to you that "it's the first time I realized that I am now closer to the end than the beginning". It's a strange sobering thought - and very eye-opening. I'd not really thought of it quite like that.

With all of these things in mind, I am heading into 2009 with a renewed goal of "being", of not missing the forest for the trees, of "keeping it simple" and focusing on those things that I can effect ... and letting the rest go. Oh, and enjoying this crazy adventure called "life" ...