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The period between night and day use to be unsettling. Waking up early would bring about worry, “Was this a somatic sign of depression?” And then, obsessively trying to fall back to sleep, I would become further aroused by each noise, light or mysterious shadow that I could barely discern in the dark.

This clearly indicates that I am an anxious sort. I am also southerner, and I come from a family of story tellers. This trifecta contributes to a compulsive need to listen and to write about individuals’ stories, including my own. Early in medical school I realized that when taking a history we are actually listening to and writing down a patient’s life’s story. In psychiatry we’ve honed this to the point where we make interpretations about meaning and motive.

Early morning awakening is less bothersome as I come to the end of my active professional career. In fact it is a welcomed respite for self-reflection. In the comfort and security of my bed my thoughts are safe. I know I should be engaged with the here, the now and the future. “How can I be to be a better husband, son, father and grandfather?” But Erikson’s development model encourages us to

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