

Time to Fall Forward!

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 11 March 2012 11:25

If you have not yet adjusted your clocks to Daylight Savings Time, from being out partying, or just plain forgot: *Greetings! □ We are from your future! □ We come in peace! □ And, may we say, how remarkably lifelike you look for this hour!*

On the other hand, if you already have your clocks all synched up, you already know that no one here has jet cars as yet, no street-corner teleportation chambers to Mars Base 179, and no take-charge robo-maids whirring around chasing Elroys or Astros, no aprons trailing behind, no doilies askew atop metallic heads. Sorry, it's not that kind of future -- we'd need a longer head start than an hour for that. Still, there's no reason to feel counted out or killed by the clock -- although, we shouldn't expect much from Daylight Savings Time, as there are no places for saving up daylight in time vaults, no *Sunshine Savings & Loans* as yet.

DST, you know, is a hand-me-down from another acronym, from the WWI era -- first bantered around in earnest about 1895, so any tightly-wound enthusiasm it might have once had for clock mechanisms has slowed a few ticks and some tocks, started to wind down some, like old grandfather clocks. Some credit a golfer miffed at having to cut short his rounds at dusk for the idea, but he's a decade too late on that score -- muffed his swing and his crack at it, took his eye off the ball.

Benjamin Franklin kicked the notion around even sooner, back in 1784, but nothing very serious got done about the new scheme for sneaking and smuggling in an hour of daylight, into early evening, after working hours, until it was realized it was a good way to save the use of incandescent lighting -- an early, big-time user of electricity. *Feel free to pause and linger here a moment, on the notion of people not yet having anything better to do with electricity than power up some lights. □ Back then, we did not require constant electrical stimulation every possible nanosecond, as we currently do today.*

Unbelievably, by 1895 or so, our forebears were almost completely done living in caves and shambling around in animal skins, by the time DST came bumbling down the road, casually tossing everyone's circadian rhythms and biorhythms into a homogenous pot. (Parenthetically, here, it is interesting to note that *"The Circadian Rhythms"* would be an excellent name for a big-band musical group, one that would play for insomniacs, jet-lagged travelers, and night workers, to help them, *you know,*
keep in the swing of things.)

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DST has been highly praised and roundly cursed. An overview of life with DST -- *migosh, that almost sounds like a disease-of-the-week, made-for-teevee-movie, "Life with DST!"* -- appears to show that for every efficiency and erg you can save or name, there are opposing lists in equal number, ready to take you to task, on whether or not this is all worth the trouble, these twice-yearly time-switcheroos. And, so it goes, back and forth, 'round and 'round, pro and con, our condensed track record of human nature. We are conflicted about time behaviors but always align and seem to do marginally fine: everything in a complete circus of utter meltdown -- a full-tilt tizzy, a regular *tiztizz-woz*, not so unlike the swirls of flying monkeys bashing and colliding in their unfiled, erratic flight plans around Oz.

After all, we have been putting monkey wrenches into absolutely *everything*, long as we've been around, we chuckleheaded primates - why would we not go ape over daylight and try to monkey around with that, too? Sure, it's been crazy keeping track of things here in the 'States, keeping an eye on Arizona and others not ducking under the DST umbrella, but, just imagine the French! Since 1784, they've endured Ben Franklin's satire, when he wrote, 228 years ago, suggesting Parisians give up night life to rise earlier in the morning, thereby conserving candles -- or, supposing a tax on window shutters, even saying church bells and cannon fire be used as alarm clocks and ringtones.

Crazy stuff, having to deal with the way sunlight elongates and shortens on a curved world such as ours, leaving us to chase our own shadows, if not always the sun. Yet, there is still a temptation by some to see late sleepers as "wasting daylight," but, no equivalent outrage in noting the vast amounts of starshine, and moonshine, going to waste each and every night. But, what can you expect from industrious ne'er-do-wells who insist on making a racket at *oh-da rk-thirty*, waking everyone up, making coffee and breakfast for 300 million or so, stomping and marching across time zones in hour-mangled hopscotch, banging pots and pans around, while some few of us try and go back to sleep.

Just thank your lucky stars we're not Romans or other ancient peoples who fractured all sense of time, and all reason, by adjusting the amounts of minutes contained in hours according to season -- so that summer's hours had more minutes in them than winter's, to make better use of the sun's more abundant free time, it was apparently thought.

And so, here we are now, where we are free to torture the rhyme: Time to move clocks up an hour, to *Fall Forward*, right on our faces, for now, and for DST -- then, come November 4, we'll

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go back the other way, regaining today's "lost" hour and, *Spring Back* in horror just two days later, casting reluctant votes in the presidential election. At polls, we are each usually sure which pol is the lesser of two

weevils

, as it is sometimes laughingly said -- but, we are just as unsure, on the clocks, which is the lesser one there,

Falling Forward

, or

Springing Back

.

Here we go, poker-faced, clowning around with clock faces again, tinkering and toying with time once again, like we had all the time in the world for such things. At least, DST is called "S-T" in some lands and places -- and, you know? That's *one* name that might actually *stick*: good ol' *S ummer Time*

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