

## GIVING IT ONE LAST TWIST

Part of a heart-shaped pendant, the little watch ran scarcely an hour at a time. But I recall the day the mystery of its lethargy was solved.

Though my wife enjoyed wearing the pendant watch, its marked tendency to sporadically stall diminished any real usefulness. In that pre-digital era, watches required regular winding, but hourly winding proved more of a chore than a school teacher could effectively indulge.

The tiny knob on the watch stem complicated the ritual, especially for small fingers. In desperation--and truly believing that I could fix anything--my wife finally handed the recalcitrant timepiece over to me to investigate and reform.

Turning the object in my hands, I tentatively and carefully searched for obvious external signs of damage or abuse. Nothing seen, I gently tweaked the stem, confirming the more-than-normal force required to turn it. But I persisted, aggressively winding until a more pronounced resistance told me that further rotation would cause damage.

This time the watch ticked on and on for more than 24 hours, proving the obvious: it had never been fully wound even though my wife had owned it since high school. Since it always stopped shortly after she put it on, adverse body chemistry seemed a reasonable cause.

I mention this embarrassing episode because history repeated itself just this past week when mushy ground on the north side of our house sent me sleuthing for a water leak.

The source wasn't hard to spot: a rivulet seeping from where the garden hose screwed onto the faucet. Resolving to fix it later, I cranked the faucet handle closed.

A few days later, however, a mysterious gurgling sound compelled my return to that same spot to investigate. Finding the ground even wetter than before, I grappled again with the misbehaving hose squirting mist into air.

In disbelief, I gave the faucet handle a stout twist. It moved imperceptibly, terminating the spray. As with the watch, initial resistance had caused me to abandon the job too quickly.

Seems like I'd eventually learn the lesson of not giving up too quickly. Mother used to tell me, as mothers are wont to do, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

Or in Calvin Coolidge's more eloquent phraseology: "Nothing in the world can take place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

And who knows but what my next push or pull or twist or tweak or turn on a problem might actually convert repeated failure into success.