

It seems like every writer has always told me to refrain from the draw of memoir until I'm old enough to have "actually" lived. That, as a young teller of short stories, I should wait to write my own down. That I need to have importance first. A reason for people to care.

Part of this echoes true, for who am I if not a person from the Midwest, another stereotype or statistic to be pushed toward the outskirts when my prime has left me. Should I fear memoir for the same reasons I desire it now? Does the pull of youth not hold enough non-fictitious sway?

As if life's value is determined by age. As if the hurts and traumas of the past don't haunt, or a moment's present pain can't scar. A kid doesn't need to grow up to know to fear adults, women don't need infomercials to warn them of men. If we're all waiting for a point to have been actually living, I fear we will all drop dead having written down nothing important enough to our living selves.

Rocks soften with age. It's science, I'm pretty sure. The elements get together and rain and snow and sleet and what-have-you and over time wear rocks down. Literally weathers them — until soft and smooth and prepared for more weathering to come.

I doubt the rocks see it that way. Mindless objects probably have trouble grasping consciousness or the concepts that pair along with the like. It's hard to know that a rainstorm will soften you if all you feel is cold water. In that way, I think humans are a bit like rocks. Or at least memoir writers are.

You want to write when soft, when knowledgeable. After the rain has pelted your back and you've been weathered, conditioned to write as your best self. I don't know if I've met a single writer who likes to reread old work — much less years old. It doesn't bring back memories, I don't peruse my old stories fondly. I reread with critical intent, scouring over every line and page and metaphor because god knows that the outdoors represents freedom, Curren.

ROCK

F A C T S

Sometimes, with writing, I feel like I'm waiting for the day the weathering stops. When I am aged fine and whip-smart and able to recount my days through the perfectionist lens I could only adapt when I have all the knowledge I lack now. Problem is, I don't know if I'll ever have said knowledge. I fear even giving these rock facts to you now, anticipating a riot on how my words are derivative and trite, as if any aren't these days.

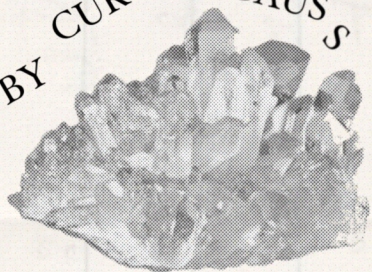
The rock facts that I've referred to, that I've named this non-memoir of sorts, aren't just about writing. Do I as a 21-year-old have all the secrets to the universe and the struggles of the human condition and insight into plights that I will never feel the pain of nor be able to understand? Politely, no. But why would I? A rock fact isn't about doing everything right, it's about accepting that even when you're not doing it perfectly, you're doing something. Something you may not have had the prior courage to do. Something that could turn into sand. Rocks have something that comes after weathering. With time, the internet has informed me that every rock, every single one, will become so worn and eroded that it will become dust. And too will you. Ashes to ashes and dust to sand and what have you.

While writing this, I found myself googling age quotes. I wanted to find an inspirational "your brain ages like fine wine" or something of the like to mock. I didn't. Instead, the results were full of quotes to help people feel better about aging.

I kind of forgot that's a fear. One I myself frequently indulge in. Mock this instead if you like, but I sometimes struggle to remember that I, too, will age. That my bones will brittle and break and my mind will meld and deep down inside it will still be me — but will anyone see that anymore?

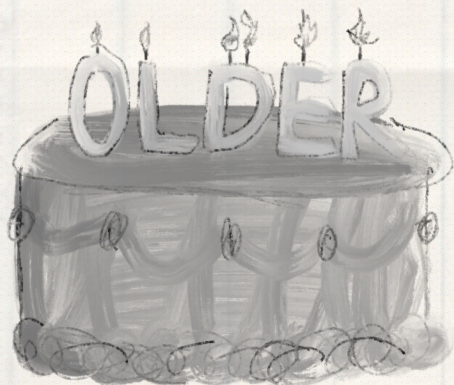
I say I forget age is feared, I say I fear it myself, and yet I yearn for the knowledge it supposedly brings. The secret special club you're admitted to when you know how to do taxes and respond appropriately to conflict and raise kids. Took a while to realize most people skip club orientation all together.

BY CURREN GAUSS



Rocks change with weathering, with harm — not age. Birth dates and numbered candles don't bring you a special answer because of course they don't. A year doesn't change you; you change you. And like you, a stone facing the same amount of turmoil over a day versus a week would have the same outcome. They don't get a club either, people just have ways to deal with weathering.

Another fear of mine, and it should be yours too, is that this weathering would be for nothing. If we don't write, if we don't write now aren't we just waiting for the sand stage? For our own rocked body to get older and more worn and hurt — with no indication that our words will be any better then. I don't want to die before I've become. I don't want that for you either.



Developmentally, someone experiencing trauma in their childhood will be poised to deal with the fallout of it for the rest of their lives. Trauma alters your brain, simple. If that same childhood trauma were to be introduced later in life, an individual may have more resources to be able to cope with that trauma quicker and more effectively if we are assuming that a child would have less access to resources. Which I am assuming.

This is all to say that a life is a life, no matter an age. It doesn't measure experience or grief or challenge. It doesn't mold your memoir or propose a debate on if you're even ready to write one.

Rock facts are mostly assumption-based.

This piece is mostly assumption-based.

I think life is, too.

We don't care about the people around us. Most likely, no matter how "good" you view yourself, you're selfish. I am, too. Unless you get stuck with a strong love-thy-neighbor gene, your interpersonal relationships and connections will always be more pressing than those across the street or in your community. Your life takes precedent; it is yours, after all.

Assumptions aren't truth and a memoir isn't always life and rocks will continue to smooth with water. And if you wait too long, that smoothness turns to sand. People smooth too; and if it's happening now, don't be afraid to take advantage of it. I would hate to see you turn into a pile of dust.

I don't know if rock facts are right for you. If you even care that your life experience could be one for the ages because it's intrinsically human. You might not want to write it all down, or dream of the day when things have happened enough to do so. It's to say that you have importance now and your life is still one worth living, even if you don't find a memoir in it today. Or a rock fact — those are hard to come by.

