

## Doing 75 in a 40 zone: Reflecting on life in an older lane

It's taken me 75 years to get to write this post. I've mentally crossed out a lot and reworded a lot during those 75 years. I've been surprised, even shocked, at some of what I've "written." "I never would have done anything like that," I've thought on more than one occasion, except of course I know that that was me doing what I did, for whatever reason seemed right at the time. My deepest regrets don't change anything. They simply serve as reminders that we are all capable of being less than who we could be, sometimes being nowhere near what we could be.

**I let fear stop me in those 75 years, more times than I can count.** Fear determined many of my choices. If I could, I'd snatch back some of those choices. But in spite of the fear, I lucked out. Some of those choices served me better than what I would have chosen, without the fear.

**Some of the worst circumstances of my life served to be my greatest assets.** Because I was raised in a family who had no money, I became financially independent at an early age. I worked hard for everything I had and never expected anyone but me to foot the bill. Because my early life was filled with illness and physical challenges, I chose an adult life of strength and weight training. Because my extended family was defined by the limits of their traumatized, Eastern European Jewish upbringings, I grabbed at everything this country offered.

**Now, at this point in my life, the contradictions of this age have shocked me.** I believe this to be simultaneously the best time and the worst time of my life, depending on whether I am stepping on a plane or am trying things on in a dressing room. I believe I am smarter and stupider than I have ever been in my life, depending on whether I am giving advice to someone or am trying to figure out any one of the computer-assisted devices that populate, and sometimes strangle, my life. I believe I am more valued now or less valued now than at any time in my life, depending on whether I am interacting with my grandchildren or with younger adults who give me advice about things I have been doing successfully for more than 50 years.

**I believe that 75 isn't the "new" anything, except for 75.** It is what each of us makes it who has been incredibly lucky to have made it this far. My birth grandmother died in her early 20s. A close friend died at 47. My mother died at 60. I don't believe that I am still here for a reason. I believe that I am here, and it's up to

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### LIFE IN THE BOOMER LANE

me to figure out what to do with that gift.

**I believe that there is nothing unique about 75 or 50 or 25 or 12 or 106.** We simply exist in whatever age we are and whatever we do at whatever age we are becomes representative of that age for others. What is different as we move along in time, is that we lose more and more people who have meant something to us. And some of those people have been real gifts to the planet, in addition to me. I find myself thinking of them at random times during the day, for no reason, or, in the case of family, when one of my grandchildren turns a certain way or expresses themselves in a certain way. It's then, at that exact moment, that I want to stop time and be able to continue to see someone I have lost, through them.

Now, I watch my friends and family age, just as I know I am aging along with them. All the cosmetic surgical procedures in the world can't change the skeletal structure or the skin cells or the gait or the stamina of an aging person. All the beliefs that we "look exactly the same as we did way back then" or even that "we look 10 years younger than our age," changes nothing.

We are not superhuman. We have not somehow bypassed the umpteen-years long process of natural human deterioration, simply because we have access to gyms and marathons and because we have traded the baggy dresses and aprons of generations past for good bras and cute Lululemon attire.

**Here are the moments in which I am aware of my age:** When something rolls under the bed or dresser, and I have to consider whether it is worth retrieving. When I open my closet and see the dusty high heels I used to walk in/dance in/live in and refuse to throw out. When I pass a mirror and look at the person reflected in it, without prep time to smile. When I see a baby and am suddenly undone by the miracle of its soft skin, bright eyes and a seeming future with no end.

**Here are the moments in which I forget**

**about my age:** When my grandchildren tell me how funny I am or when I am telling stories to them and can see on their faces that I am taking them to places they have never been before. When I can tell by Now Husband's leering expression that he thinks I look really sexy. When a guy at the gym looks over at me, not realizing for a split second that I'm his mother's (or grandmother's) age. When I'm with my friends and there are simply a lot more things to discuss and laugh about than aging. When the gratitude for my life overwhelms anything else that may be happening around me.

**If I am fortunate enough to turn 80,** and am still writing this blog, I'm sure I will have more to say. In the meantime, I make this promise (an old one, begun around age 50, and faithfully followed):

1. I will tell my children, grandchildren and husband that I love them every time I see them or talk to them. They already know they can't get off the phone without that happening.

2. I will do one physical activity each year that scares the crap out of me (I'm a complete wuss, so if I told you what these were, you would laugh. But for me, they are epic.)

3. I will do something non-physical that scares the crap out of me.

4. I will go someplace in the world that I have never been before.

The State of Virginia has seen fit to applaud me (with an official congratulatory certificate) for nothing more than breathing. While I appreciate the gesture, I do wish that they had, instead, applauded me for contributing to the state over the decades by teaching, volunteering, being involved in community causes and not using up taxpayers' money on police services. At any rate, they should know that, thankfully, my life now does continue to include a lot more than breathing. I'd also like to tell them that I am not proud of having turned 75. I am honored.

—Find more musings of a former hula hoop champion at [lifeintheboomerlane.com](http://lifeintheboomerlane.com).