

Hope Over Experience

You could not deny her enthusiasm. Take sport for example. At school she had tried out for all the teams despite having no discernible talent, technique, or stamina. She once made it onto the subs bench for her house hockey team. She even scored a goal. Admittedly for the other side, but still. The team played one man short for the rest of the match while she cheered from the side-lines. Her family dreaded domestic science days when she brought home rock hard Chelsea buns or pale and gloopy bowls of macaroni cheese. Her embroidery was a grubby knot of tangled threads which her mother would unpick and redo for her.

She was not academically gifted, but she was diligent and worked hard. Her grades were just about good enough to get her into a red brick university. Undergraduate life presented her with further opportunities, but she failed to get elected as Student Union Welfare Officer and was an indifferent and sporadic member of various clubs and societies. She left with a second-class degree and a husband.

Her career was unremarkable, reaching as she did the heady heights of lower middle management. Her annual appraisal generally described her as a 'safe pair of hands'. She had enough common sense to encourage, and then rely on, the brighter younger and more ambitious members of her small team.

Her children showed initial promise and got into the local grammar school. Having peaked at eleven they then coasted and under achieved. While other children received awards and scholarships, parents' evenings for her were peppered with "must try harders" and "could do better". Her offspring had inherited her enthusiasm, but not her work ethic. She sat through numerous painful school concerts while her children energetically and tunelessly sawed at violins or honked on trumpets. Her fridge was covered in their prolific and unremarkably daubs.

In her spare time she tried numerous hobbies, hoping with each new activity that this one would be the one where she effortlessly excelled. Her friends and relations were polite about the scarves she knitted for them all one Christmas. Her father loyally wore a garish and misshapen jumper to do the gardening in. Her submission to Grayson Perry's Art Club was rejected and was hung in the downstairs toilet. She took golf lessons and could achieve either distance or direction but not both at the same time – the golf ball slicing off into the rough or dribbling a few feet down the fairway. She joined a choir but one which did not require an audition and burbled along in the middle of the altos trying not to put the others off their tune.

With retirement looming she needed some new activity. Her hand hovered over the Watford Writers page on the computer.....