

Life begins at Felicity Pulman

It begins at 40, so they say. And so it did for me when, as a bored housewife, I decided to go back to school and then went on to uni to do a BA in Communications.

They were exhausting but exhilarating years, first at TAFE with two amazing teachers doing English and History for a mature-age HSC, and then on to UTS with dreams of becoming a famous radio, film or television personality.

The first hard lesson I learned, back in the day when computers were just coming into their own, was that I was a technoklutz, the original PICNIC offender (Problem In Chair Not in Computer.) Ruling out anything to do with technology killed my budding career in the media along with my dreams of stardom. But one of the first subjects I took at uni was Creative Writing. I loved it, and couldn't wait to get on the ferry home to start jotting down my burgeoning story ideas using a pen and notebook – no technology involved! My imagination ran wild as I filled page after page with writing, often having to be reminded to get off the ferry after it had stopped.

It was a while before I realised I'd gone back to my childhood, when I used to purloin exercise books from the classroom stationery cupboard, and fill them with my stories and drawings. In fact, it took me 40+ years to think of story-telling as a possible career path. In the interim, apart from marriage and children, I'd done several courses, including a secretarial course that led to a variety of jobs and which also turned me into a fast typist – something I bless to this day! However, I still hand-wrote my stories for years after my 'homework' on the ferry rides home, although I always typed the final versions before sending them to publishers. With a couple of deadlines looming, I finally gave away pen and pad and created straight onto a computer, with all the blessings of the cut and paste options!

Now, with more than 20 published novels under my belt, I regret those wasted years when I could have been doing what I've always loved. So I've learned (at last!) that life begins ... at the moment you have the courage to follow your heart and step into the unknown.