

# Turning 50

by Christine Sarno-Doyle



The calendar says I'm 50 years old. I feel 50. I've heard others say, "I don't feel 50!" as they mark their half-a-century date. But I do. Until recently there was a part of me that had clung to the idea that I at least looked 35, but a recent trip to a fashion mall to buy just the right dress for a special wedding disproved that notion too.

"I found it! Perfect! This is me!" I excitedly declared as I took the pink, handkerchief-hemmed, spaghetti strapped evening dress into the dressing room. I turned to the mirror and gasped, "When did that happen?"



Cruel, that's all I can say, it was cruel, a cruel twist of fate that I would one day no longer look just gorgeous in that chiffon flowing oh so lovely gown. Oh my, am I doomed to the two-piece box style jacket and elastic-waist skirt with oh so pretty sequins? (Aaagghhh! Excuse me - my Charlie Brown impersonation.) When I want to throw caution to the wind, I can bring myself back to 35, 25, 19 and feel the enthusiasm and energy again. But those moments don't last very long. I feel 50.

Time, emotion, energy: all have taken their toll. It has been a tremendous journey, one of triumph over despair and insolvency. All of my memories are significant. There seems to have been truly little "down time". Maybe that is a gift in itself.



I've lived longer than my mother, who at 40 had more life ahead of her than I could have imagined at 14. When you are that young, everyone seems so old. I have survived my late husband by 30 years, who at 21 at least had the joy of seeing his son born and was able to love him for a few short months. I've lived long enough to experience real, profound joy, the love of children and the sharing of many special times. I've lived long enough to have experienced things that I could not have imagined.

I've lived long enough to know that through experiencing hurt and disappointment, I understand adversity, and know that by sticking it out, one day at a time, one hour at a time, one minute at a time, I can triumph. Things really do turn around and ultimately, I am stronger for the experience.

I've learned that there is a difference between pain and suffering: pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

I've lived long enough to realize that my most difficult work had nothing to do with pursuing a career or higher education. It had everything to do with growing, gaining self-esteem, self-worth, overcoming trauma, wading through chaos, sifting through the muddled messages that

come from a familial system with no sound foundation or guidance, learning about boundaries and gaining the courage to set them when the term itself seemed arcane. Fear slowed the process: fear of reprisal, fear of rejection. But I've lived long enough to realize that fear is manipulative. It has nothing to do with who I am, and has everything to do with keeping me from being who I am.

I've lived long enough to know a sense of humor means everything. I can laugh at myself. I see myself and my inane character flaws.

I've lived long enough and have made enough mistakes to know that the sum of my mistakes is not the end of the world. I will recover, learn from them, and get on with life.

I've lived long enough to realize that money is not so important. It is necessary, but it does not feed the soul. My soul is what sustains me.

“Follow your dreams and listen to your heart for in its wisdom lies a destiny unique only to you.” These are words I wrote to my nephew who sought his own courage to strike out and find his own way. Ironically, I needed to hear them too. “We ‘get it’ when we give it away,” so true. So, I remind myself to take time to be still and listen to my heart as it whispers to me its wisdom.



Turning fifty does not force me to confront ambitions of youth that will not be realized. I have achieved more than I ever thought possible, at 19, 25, 35.

I have realized my dreams of seeing my son grow into a wonderful young man – this is who I am most proud and for which I am most grateful. This little boy, adolescent, traveled this precarious journey with me.

I have realized my dream of buying my family home. And, today have the joy of seeing my son and grandson, fourth and fifth generations, live there making their own memories enjoying and loving the legacy.

I have realized my dream of obtaining a college degree – 13 years in the making.

I have realized a dream of sharing love / life with true life-long friends.

I have realized my dream of spending time at home with my grandson.

I have realized my dream of not having to carry the world on my shoulders as I once did.

I have realized my dream of being accepted to law school. God willing, I will realize the dream of graduation, and still another of putting my abilities to work for others to realize their own potential.

During childhood years and into adulthood, I wondered constantly about the future, who I would marry, how many children I would have, and worried constantly about who I would become,

how I would manage. While I remain curious about the future, I am no longer obsessed by it. I've learned that when engrossed in the art of projection, I ask one question, "What is the best thing that I can do for myself at this moment?" For, the best prediction of the future is what I am doing in the present.

I've come to understand that I'm not as responsible for it all as I thought - for so long. I am really not in charge.

I've experienced enough of life to know that my higher power is not limited by my imagination. Leaps of pure faith have brought incredible gifts. My part involves acceptance, a day at a time, and doing the footwork.

One unimaginable gift: the many loving hearts that would guide me along this journey, and through a massive maze of uncertainty. People, who, to this little girl, young woman, now middle-aged Nona, had an extraordinary impact on an ability to survive, thrive and be happy.

Life at fifty has a past and a present, as well as a future. It is no longer improbable to me that what is yet to come will be the happiest time of my life.

I view vast horizons. I anticipate a future of adventure and wonderful surprises. I've earned it.

So, I'm off to LIVE my life! even if it's not in the pink, handkerchief-hemmed, spaghetti strapped evening dress. It WILL be extraordinary!



Follow your dreams and listen to your heart for in its wisdom lies a destiny unique only to you.

Look forward to tomorrow as if it were to visit a dear friend. The smile you bring will make a world of difference.

Everyone in this world wants to make a difference, wants to accomplish something, to shine; let them.

Every time I see a butterfly, I wonder who it is that wishes to visit me and let me know they care.

Losses in my life cannot compare to losing me. When I define myself only by what I do, or what others think, I cease to exist.

I've dipped in to the well too often because I had to survive, or because I've felt I had to for others to survive. Once this resource is depleted, we learn -by necessity - to guard it with our life.

When I can't go any further, I take one more step.

I couldn't help but wonder what tomorrow would bring, but then I couldn't help but wonder what Christmas would bring either. I've learned it's what I bring that will count.

Others cannot possibly know us, nor we them, acceptance then.

Look back only to gauge distance.

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