

The Joy of Aging – Women’s Fiction (of course)

The writer’s block crumbles and settles under my computer as the words flow like Niagara from my enlightened brain. Certainly some editor will be thrilled at my sudden inspiration. I’ve decided to name the article 100 Ways to Enjoy Menopause and Retirement. Already, I’ve thought of two - or was it three?

How wonderful to be able to empathize with half the population as we pass from baby-boomers into the realm of social security benefactors. The political correctness of our times has removed some of the painful adjectives. We no longer become senile. Some one made up a more interesting way to say it. Now we get Alzheimer’s and in the early stages, where I’ve been struggling for several years now, it’s addressed as “senior moments.”

Another improvement in terminology was replacing “old folk” and “aged” – that’s pronounced “age – *ed*,” with “senior citizen.” Doesn’t that sound so bright? And active! I picture parades of gray-haired, overweight athletes, carrying banners and hand-painted signs pushing for the latest reforms in "Global Warming" or "Save the Sharks.". Put away the knitting, ladies, we’re full of energy and boundless enthusiasm!

I have the title for my article, so now all I need are a few thousand words to add. Okay. Number one. I glance at my notebook that I scribbled on in the wee hours without the benefit of light. It looks like “lime.” What had I meant? I use lemon in my tea, not lime. Oh, yes – “time.” That’s it! We have time! That’s a real plus.

My mind goes back to the years of raising my brood. There was never time then. Between shopping, cooking, yelling, chauffeuring, cleaning, and

yelling – there was never that time for “me.” Of course, back then, we didn’t think that much about “me” did we? We concentrated on “them” – our loved ones. The children we had brought into the world and the husband we had promised to love forever and ever. It wasn’t fashionable in the 50’s and early 60’s to worry about our own fulfillment so much. We wanted to nurture. That’s what fulfilled us. Yes, it was tiring and sometimes monotonous. We often went to bed at the same time as the kids, but our focus was not inward. How many of your friends needed counseling?

Okay – “time.” Returning to the keyboard, I began.

“How exhilarating to be retired and have time for the many things we’ve desired to do – like mountain climb; go to Switzerland and ski the Alps; join a mission group in the deepest jungle of Africa! And now – and now, who has the energy or even the desire? Apparently all those high hopes have died somewhere along the way, maybe while we were putting in those extra hours to pay the college tuitions or care for our widowed mothers. Wherever the energy went, it hasn’t returned. But there is time, usually, for some of the more realistic desires. We can golf, surely, and join our bowling team once a week – in the morning now before the leagues take over. We can improve our Bridge or unearth the Canasta cards. And garden! Just be sure when you stoop to weed that there’s a tree or bench nearby – that is, if you want to get up again. Funny how those joints and muscles have decided you don’t need them as much as you did when you were younger. Some people do use their time in ways to improve society and I commend them for their service. I really do. In fact, volunteering at a local hospital or Red Cross is on the list. It really is nice to have time to do something for your community and it doesn’t require a Master’s degree in anything to lend a hand.”

I'm sure I can improve on all that when I begin the editing process, but let's get on to number two, before I misplace the scribbling, and forget the whole premise of the article. Number two. New hobby.

I think I kinda covered that one, but here goes.

“Now that we have the time we never seemed to find, we can dust off the ‘how-to’ books from the garage and get inspired to try our hand at something new. Why not learn how to carve a duck? Or screen in the porch? Or make truffles?”

Now, I actually have wanted to make truffles, but not only does it look ridiculously complicated, but the calorie count is above the national debt. I'm talking about the chocolate ones, not the ones the pigs dig up. Honestly, could you limit your intake to half a truffle a day – or every other day? I went back to the computer and backspaced over truffles, adding ‘healthful salads.’ Boorrring! Back-spaced again. Put in ‘sticky-buns.’ Forget the calorie count.

“A friend of mine has taken his craft to new heights and now sells his decoys for hundreds of dollars.”

Okay, a slight exaggeration. He makes them for his son and complains that he finds them decorating the basement, (which isn't ‘finished’), but I'm allowed some slack here.

“One could create a recipe book by rummaging through the drawers and loose-leaf notebooks saved from years of cutting out recipes that never made it to the table. It's a great way to leave a legacy to the family.”

I actually did this, but it took nearly a year. Now my kids will have recipes *they'll* never use. If it can't be created or heated in ten minutes, it won't make it to most tables today.

“Most churches offer short-term missions that can be rewarding.”

I've considered doing these trips, but quite honestly, I have no real gift – no nursing degree and I'm scared of ladders. I'm beat by 4:00 most days and I haven't done much to brag about, but some people my age really do have a lot to offer. If nothing else I can support the missions with funding and certainly prayer is never wasted.

It's time to think of the third joy of aging. It's getting a little tougher now. No more scribbles from the night epiphany. I'm on my own. Time. New hobby. Surely it's not that difficult. I have ninety-eight more to go. I think I'll change it to "Five." That's more realistic. Tip of pen in mouth, foot dancing on floor. Got it. Make new friendships. Great!

“You can join a Red Hat group, ladies. And gents, how about Bocci Ball? It's time to reach out and make new friends.”

Have you ever gone to a senior center and notice how people flock around you to get to know you? Neither have I. Come to think of it, most of those occasions are used up to list one's latest ailments and catch up on who's in the hospital and who's funeral you've attended. So up-lifting. No wonder my mother refused to go to senior meetings. Their monthly speakers spoke on a wide range of material. From 'Planning Your Own Funeral,' 'Getting Your Estate in Order,' to 'Keeping Track of Your Medications.'

My mother preferred watching "Jeopardy" or hitting the clearance sales at Macy's. She stayed current on everything political and even had time for dates!

Number four is staring me in the face. I check the clock. I've been writing for an hour now. Time to take advantage of my free time. I slide the mouse and mark “save” and now I'll grind up fresh coffee beans. I've worked hard enough for one day and it's time to enjoy the sunrise.