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## Dying to Meet the Future

by Jacquie Scarborough

In this column, I've focused on deciphering the next phase of my life. I belong to a woman's spirit circle and one of the upcoming discussions was to be about life's passages - what's next?

I was very excited since I've put so much energy into pondering this topic since I retired, and now I had another opportunity to spend some mental and spiritual energy looking at both what I'm leaving behind and what may lie ahead.

The quote given us to ponder was by Gail Sheehy; "All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another."

Ironically, I was unable to attend the spirit circle because my mother-in-law died. Needless to say, it was easy for me to look at what was dying in my life and to get in touch with the feelings associated with this.

I'd always thought of a passage as a journey, in which you leave an individual, or a place, or job, or phase and enter into another. But I hadn't realized so acutely that life's passages can often mean the passing of a human life.

I was amazed at the range of my feelings associated with her death: resistance, communion with her spirit, joy that the pain was over, sorrow, the pain of throwing out what once she held dear, and poignantly admitting that my generation was now the oldest one.

I had a strong desire to celebrate her life, to thank her caretakers, and to avoid dissension among the siblings over her "stuff." Lastly, for myself, I wanted to grab life while I had it - to eliminate the trivial and irrelevant and concentrate on the meaningful and the majestic. And this, in a sense, was my rebirth.



Great Island, 1998, Watercolor, by 'Sissi' Sneve-Schultze

I recently spent an intense weekend with my woman's group of over 30 years, and realized we are all in transition, dealing with retirement, empty nest, elder or dying parents, ill health, moving, re-creating relationships with grown children, marriage break-ups or death, and intensified spirituality.

While some of these may be happy events, others were very painful. Travel during retirement, for example, can be exhilarating, but adjusting to an ill and aging body is demoralizing. It's a time of letting go of your parents, kids, health, home, full-time work and salary.

But it's also a time to intensify relationships and find true community - to spend more time with others who share your interests, to modify relationships with married children, to play with your grand children, to have fun with your network of friends, and to enjoy your significant other.

It's a time to follow your true loves and avocations, and to contribute to society as a volunteer.

I have decided to write down a list of what I have done that was meaningful, then compose a list of what I want to experience, share, see, and do before I die. The first would be like writing my own obituary.

As I've said before, the mere act of writing down goals can be life changing, and I expect this to be just that. How, I wonder, will I choose to fill the last years of my life?

"Always leave enough time in your life to do something that makes you happy, satisfied, even joyous. That has more of an effect on economic well-being than any other single factor."

Paul Hawken



Jacquie Scarborough is a regular contributor to this magazine. She lives in Harwich and plans to journal the various adventures she encounters after her retirement as Program Director of WE CAN.

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