

Now that I turned 65...

Heather Anne Wakeling Lister - November 2025

I recently turned 65 and celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary. And, no one is more surprised than I am at having arrived at these milestones—it is wonderous what loving and being loved can do for a person.

Qualifying for my government pension has been accompanied with my astonishment of just how rapidly the years have passed—seemingly the age of seniority arrived before I did.

Today, my experience of time is vastly different than while I meandered through my childhood and youthful explorations. My autumn years were spent adulating with a somewhat subjective, dubious maturity, while I continued to regard time as a luxurious stretch into an unending spiral.

Entering my winter season, I no longer take time for granted. A realization reinforced through a recent conversation with Leigh, my friend of 60-years. An experienced, adrenaline-fueled athlete, she always took movement for granted, and expressed shock of having fallen down some stairs by saying, “there’s nothing guaranteed anymore.”

Interesting choice of words: ‘nothing guaranteed’ —as if, in truth, anything ever was. While I tried to follow socially-contracted rules, once those began to loosen up, the older I became, the more lessons learned, the less sure I’ve become about anything—quite frankly, it’s a wonder I can sort socks.

Truth be told, not every lesson ended ‘nicely’—but they did end. Taking to heart the Appalachian saying: ‘Don’t worry if you’re happy, this too will pass,’ years of practiced survival didn’t result in a perfect life. But a life nonetheless.

While social rules ebb and flow, there is one constant consideration: the dependable, yet inconsistent nature of change. Those ironic loops of repetitive scenarios, each presented with alternate players and geography. And within those contradictions I’ve created one heck of a catch-all.

And since my 60s, change has become my present state of being.

I’ve succumbed to the view that defending, or defying change, is my personal equivalent to overstuffing the kitchen’s junk drawer. My habit of squirreling away for some ‘just-in-case’ repair, all those niggling bits and bobs that make no sense at all, until I need to use one.

Similarly, my mind holds space for overstuffing memories, my ability to hold on to those ‘just-in-case’ life experiences have, more often than not, come in handy when re-facing a situation that requires experienced resiliency.

I know now that everything that could happen, does—and not everything happens for a good reason. While to my mind everything that happens can be used, there are situations which I can’t figure out what possible use could ever be made from such evil.

Therefore, aging means that whenever I’m clearing out those ‘just-in-case’ items, either physical, mental or spiritual, I take a second look, as I never know when something will come in handy.

Physically, I’ve kept items such as a pocket jackknife, 1960’s battery hand-held radio, a drain stopper, lids and lots of those extra ties used to bundle common extras together, or in the garden to tether tomatoes to a stake. I’ve added eye-glasses, a new knee, breast prostheses, high-waisted pants and low-heeled shoes.

Mentally, I have tied a tight string around difficult, hard-time memories: those held close alongside magnificent failures, when even mouthing the word forgiveness leaves a bitter taste on my tongue. Yet remaining safe within that particular lot of memories are my ‘cousins, Endurance and Solution’—so when hard times inevitably come ‘round again, I will remember what to do.

And then, choosing to flex a rather loose elastic band around a lifetime of beautiful memories of love, joy, laughter within healthy friendships, creativity and ease of health, that will allow for plenty of room to include future experiences that, in time, will add more memories to savour.

Now forearmed with the knowledge that going back to lick a wound open doesn’t allow for healing, I’ve learned to respect those ruts, to leave them alone with time as their company, so scars can form and effectively seal off residual pain.

And this I think, is my spiritual life lesson: learning patience from vulnerability and placing trust within the current of change.

After all, I have been blessed with three lives: My mother permitted my first one. Others sequestered the second. Then came the third, the real one. Built from what was left over after everything that I had placed trust in, was destroyed.

Rebuilding my life through change has been, and continues to be an important part of my life journey. Today, I live wrapped within the love that arrived only after explosive changes forced me into a new direction, and now ... supported by prayer to be granted continued purpose—with ease and grace—I’m remaining curious, attentive, following the current of change as my new normal.