

Senior Spotlight

By Karen King Russo

Here it is October, the colorful month when much of the world is ablaze in reds, yellows and golds. It is the time when California transplants miss the change of seasons. Many flock to the East Coast to meander through New England or to take one of the cruises from Boston to Nova Scotia in order to enjoy the splendid show of the autumn leaves. Scientists say that fall slows processes. With less chlorophyll, trees are allowed to reveal their hidden colors and another side of their true nature.

The poets insist on reminding those of us of a certain age that we are in the autumn of our years. An interesting metaphor. Nature at its purest, most flamboyant and glorious. What do ya think?

Ask almost anyone who lives where there is a distinct change of seasons and they will tell you that autumn is their favorite. Even here at the beach where we have to search for subtle changes, most say they like autumn best. The air becomes clear and crisp, the sun peeks in from a different angle, the roar of the crowds abates, new activities resume, and football takes up our Saturday afternoons. Yet, there is a mood for reflection.

If autumn is nature’s most spectacular time, isn’t it possible that it is our most spectacular age as well? With our autumn years comes time that enables us to try new things, the freedom for caprice and adventure. Besides major voyages across the sea, we can hop in our cars and enjoy a motor trip, stopping at places along the way that we used to rush by in favor of some destination or other. We have time to take chances on new activities such as painting, photography, writing, golf, bridge, piano or guitar, all without having to make a living at it, or even to be recognized. Just the involvement can be expanding and offer a new way of being.

We come to accept ourselves even if God did not make us an opera singer or an astronaut. Even if we did not found the Red Cross, serve in a refugee camp or sit on the Supreme Court. There is time to give of ourselves in minor but meaningful ways. We might tutor children, visit older seniors, coach in computer centers, volunteer with literacy programs, assist at election poles, pound nails for Habitat for Humanity, mentor a young businessman or woman, or just help with our own grandchildren. Just taking time

to visit a sick neighbor or truly listen to our friends brings us closer to the essence of our humanity. And there is nothing wrong with taking some time for ourselves, grabbing a novel and heading to the patio, deck, or beach.

Of great importance, we feel more deeply. We are more touched by both the joys and pains of life. The smile of a new grandchild, the brilliance of a sunset, a favorite opera aria, lines from a poem, or the lips of a loved one brings on a quivering lip or a tear, formerly hidden. But also the realization that life is fragile, and that none of us is exempt from its sorrows and agonies, even if not evenly distributed, becomes more fully realized with age.

We are nicer. Some get pretty cranky in their winter years, but they probably hurt more. But in the autumn years, being less competitive, less ego-driven, we root for each other.

Aren’t you thrilled when your contemporaries are looking great, still playing tennis, building a new house or new business, or embarking on some other activity? We are more supportive, tolerant, and appreciative of our spouses, our families and our friends. That is why we are so busy. We have all the old friends to keep up with, and are out making new ones too.

Do I sound just too much like Pollyanna? I don’t think so. Tragedy and loss is part of life and can strike at any age. We are already beginning to lose more people and it seems way too early. At best, we have lower back pain. Some days I awaken as stiff as a two-by-four. Where would I be without Advil? And isn’t caution a bore - being careful where and how you step, for fear of breaking something.

That line between pushing oneself and sensible caution is illusive. I tell myself, I’d like to be a glider pilot, if only I were younger. Truth is, I’d be scared to death... None of that takes away from the blessings of the autumn years.

One day, God willing, I will be trying to put a positive spin on the winter years. I’ll worry about that then. For now, I am going out to buy pumpkins, red and gold chrysanthemums and cider, and enjoy all aspects of the autumn years.

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Dear Carol



Dear Carol,
My husband’s best friend from their army days 10 years ago came to visit. We’ve been married three years and I thought the guy didn’t exist because my husband kept talking about him and how great he is but I’d never seen him. Well, he finally came to visit. He was going to stay three days. That was three weeks ago. He is a nice guy and my husband really likes having him here but he has taken over the basement where we have our computer and entertainment center. He is having a great vacation but it is more work for me, my husband was laid off two months ago and money is tight. Feeding another person is getting difficult and I want my privacy and normal way of life back. My husband is so happy with him here I hesitate to talk about my feelings and I rarely get him alone long enough for a private conversation. I’m getting resentful and angry; I don’t like feeling this way.

Feeling like a Maid
Dear Maid,
Your signature says it all. Your position in the family and relationship with your husband has changed with the extended stay of his

friend. It is time to speak to your husband. Tell the friend you need some private time and ask him to go for a walk. Tell your husband how you feel and how you would like things to be. Think about this ahead of time. Do not make demands; tell him how you would feel if the friend was gone. Try to establish a departure date. If the friend stays for much longer establish some rules about contributing money, doing chores and giving you some time to yourself need to be established. Ask for what you want instead of swallowing anger and becoming bitter and unpleasant to be around.

Dear Carol,
I have started to watch my grandchildren after school each day. They are eight and 11 years old. They expect to have a snack of soft drinks and chips when they get to my house. They are both getting fat and I think one reason is eating all of that sugar and fat each afternoon. Those things are expensive too. I want to give them nutritious food like juice and fruit but they turn their noses up at that. I want them to enjoy coming to my home but I don’t want to feed them junk. What should I do?

Nana
Dear Nana,
Stand your ground! You know what is good for these children and you run your own home. At grandmother’s house we follow grandmother’s rules and that includes healthy, economical snacks. Sometimes children are more willing to eat food they have prepared themselves. Can you teach them to cook or prepare a healthier snack? You may create memories and teach a new skill as you three spend time talking and cooking together. Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com or mail to Herald Publications. Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •

Political Penguin

By Duane Plank
Alrightee, penning this gem as I eagerly await the idiot Richard Heene to be charged with multiple felonies, if that is possible. The “Balloon Buffoon” and his publicity-seeking loser wife have apparently admitted that the flight of fancy was indeed a hoax. And don’t we all hope that the weirdo “storm chaser” has to make restitution for any and all of the expenses accrued during the televised escapade?
Pinhead Heene, chasing fame cuz he is an idiot, can’t even tell the truth to the folks who are closest to him. Ask one Dean Askew, who picked up Weenie Heene at the Sheriff’s office after the wierdo and his co-conspirator wife were allowed to leave wherever they were incarcerated.
Said his former friend, we hope, Dean Askew, when asked why Heene didn’t exit quietly through the backdoor when allowed to leave. Publicity seeker? “He was adamant about going out in front. Then it dawned on me. This man is seeking fame...I got angry. I couldn’t understand why he wouldn’t take the safe route.” Cuz the guy is a publicity-seeking bum?
Heard recently from some of the cannabis smokers out there that something is brewing here in the Great Bankrupt State in regards to medical marijuana. All right folks, may have to out some of these people next week, but if I do, they could fire back at me. So, being that I probably have a couple of skeletons in the closet, I will demur. Skeletons, eh? Halloweenie week, right.
Apparently a recent court ruling disallowed a ban on new local pot dispensaries. Seems that there are in the neighborhood of 800 pot palaces in the City of Angels, the most in the country. Good to see LA is number one in something nationally. Sure that wonderful news will make a few of my more enlightened

readers blissfully smile.
The folks who want to limit the pot palaces claim that the hangouts lead to a bunch of slacking smokers loitering about, and that leads to more crime in the area. Sounds like stereotyping to me.
Don’t know a ton about the medical benefits of pot, but maybe I should find out if the weed can be used to cure a bad case of runaway cholesterol. Cuz I can’t seem to give up the French fries and hot dogs. Or the jalapenos. Not my fault. The folks that I hang out with continue to enable me.
Let me get out my little violin and play a sorrowful tune for the 25 or so executive swindlers who had their outrageous pay slashed by Mr. Obama and the folks in Washington. The same people who handed their failed companies tens of billions of dollars each during the initial round of the bailout playoffs. And these guys and gals work for a corporate who’s who in America: AIG, Citigroup, B of A, General Motors Co., Chrysler, and the financing spinoffs of the automakers.
Seems like “we the people: have donated nearly \$250 billion to the failed companies, run into the ground by the same folks who were cashing their obscene paychecks as they were pink-slipping long-time employees, and padlocking the doors on manufacturing plants and sales offices.
Hooray for Ken Feinberg, hired by tax scofflaw Tim Geithner, who also happens to be our Treasury Secretary. Feinberg is the one credited with developing the plan to cut the blowhard executives pay. Here are some of the numbers that I saw posted recently. Guy running CitiGroup, the CFO, made more than \$12 mil last year. And his vice-chairman pocketed more than \$10 mil.

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