

SPECTRUM

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Zoomer Views

Suddenly I am the adult

MILESTONES/ *Sharing stories of moments in peoples' lives when they realize they have officially reached adulthood*

by Patti Post-Smith

We have managed to put Patti back together again, but the glue is still a little damp around the edges, so this week she suggested, rather than taking a chance in causing her to "crack" again, that we share with you this article on milestones in adult lives.

SUDDENLY I'M THE ADULT FROM: PSYCHOLOGY TODAY MAY 1987 - BY RICHARD COHEN

Several years ago, my family gathered on Cape Cod for a weekend. My parents were there, my sister and her daughter, too, two cousins and, of course, my wife, my son and me. We ate at one of those restaurants where the menu is scrawled on a blackboard held by a chummy waiter and had a wonderful time. With dinner concluded, the waiter set the check down in the middle of the table. That's when it happened. My father did not reach for the check.

In fact, my father did nothing. Conversation continued. Finally, it dawned on me. ME! I was supposed to pick up the check. After all these years, after hundreds of restaurant meals with my parents, after a lifetime of thinking of my father as the one with the bucks, it had all changed. I reached for the check and whipped out my American Express card. My view of myself was suddenly altered. With a stroke of the pen, I was suddenly an adult.

Some people mark off their life in years, others in events. I am one of the latter, and I think of some events as rites of passage. I did not become a young man at a particular year, like 13, but when a kid strolled into the store where I worked and called me "mister" I turned around to see whom he was calling. He repeated it several times - "Mister, mister." —looking straight at me. The realization hit like a punch: ME! He was talking to me. I was suddenly a mister.

There have been other milestones. The cops of my youth always seemed to be big, even huge, and of course they were older than I was. Then one day they were neither. In fact, some of them were kids—short kids at that. Another milestone.

The day comes when you suddenly realize that all the football players in the game you're watching are younger than you. Instead of being big men, they are merely big kids. With that milestone goes the fantasy that someday, maybe, you too could be a player—maybe not a football player but certainly a baseball player. I had a good eye as a

kid—not much power, but a keen eye—and I always thought I could play the game. One day I realized that I couldn't. Without having ever reached the hill, I was over it.

For some people, the most momentous milestone is the death of a parent. This happened recently to a friend of mine. With the burial of his father came the realization that he had moved up a notch. Of course, he had known all along that this would happen, but until the funeral, the knowledge seemed theoretical at best. As long as one of your parents is alive, you stay in some way a kid. At the very least, there remains at least one person whose love is unconditional.

For some women, a milestone is reached when they can no longer have children. The loss of a life, the inability to create one—they are variations on the same theme. For a childless woman who could control everything in life but the clock, this milestone is a cruel one indeed.

I count other, less serious milestones—like being audited by the Internal Revenue Service. As the auditors caught my mistake after mistake, I sat there pretending that really knowing about taxes was for adults. I, of course, was still a kid. The auditor was buying none of it. I was a taxpayer, an adult. She all be said, Go to jail.

There have been others. I remember the day when I had a ferocious argument with my son and realized that I could no longer bully him. He was too big and the days when I could just pick him up and take him to this room/isolation cell were over. I needed to persuade, reason. He was suddenly, rapidly, older. The conclusion was inescapable: So was I.

One day you go to your friends' weddings. One day you celebrate the birth of their kids. One day you see one of their kids driving, and one day those kids have kids of their own. One day you meet at parties and then at weddings and then funerals. It all happens in one day. Take my word for it.

I never thought I would fall asleep in front of the television set as my father did, and as my friends' fathers did, too. I remember my parents and their friends talking about insomnia and they sounded like members of a different species. Not able to sleep? How ridiculous. Once it was all I did. Once it was what I did best.

I never thought I would eat a food that did not agree with me. Now I meet them all the time. I thought I would never go to the beach and not swim. I spent all of August at the beach and never once went into the ocean. I never thought I would

appreciate opera, but now the pathos, the schmaltz and, especially, the combination of voice and music appeal to me. The deaths of Mimi and Tosca move me, and they die in my home as often as I can manage it.

I never thought I would prefer to stay home instead of going to a party, but now I find myself pass-

ing parties up. I used to think that people who watched birds were weird, but this summer I found myself watching them, and maybe I'll get a book on the subject. I yearn for a religious conviction I never thought I'd want. I'm not in my heritage anyway, feel close to ancestors long gone and echo my father in arguments with my son. I still lose.

One day I made a good toast. One day I handled a headwaiter. One day I bought a house. One day—what a day—! I became a father, and not long after that I picked up the check for my own. I thought then and there it was a rite of passage for me. Not until I got older did I realize that it was one for him, too. Another milestone.

Notice of meeting

Continuing Adult, Mature and Part-time University Students will hold their ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on Friday, October 16, 1992 11:30am - 1:30pm in The Victoria Room, Old Arts Building, 3rd floor. Agenda will include the election of new officers for the year.

Nominations will close Friday, October 9, at 4:00 p.m.

Candidates names must be submitted, in writing and reach the CAMPUS office, (basement of the Dept. of Extension), no later than October 9 in order to be considered for election.

Please address inquiries to: CAMPUS (Zoomers), P.O. Box 4400, Fredericton, N.B. E3B 5A3

or call 453-3596 and talk to the machine.

The positions available, along with a short description of each will be posted in the CAMPUS information box in the main entrance to Tilley Hall.

The Black Triangle

Homophobia: The huge monster

ALIEN CONCEPT/ *Tristis Bhaird examines the reasons for homophobia and heterophobia in light of same-gender relationships.*

by Tristis Bhaird

Homophobia is a much used word when describing the society around us. It's like a huge monster, sometimes, standing just within claw's reach of us.

We use it as a reason for not behaving as our heterosexual counterparts do. We don't bring our lovers to weddings, don't go to office parties, hold back on romantic walks in the park and stutter as we try to keep from saying "Darling, pick out some lettuce!" in the grocery store.

I have a theory that puts this notion of societal saturation of homophobia in the waste-bin: I think that most of them don't care, and that fewer of them would care, if the idea of two people of the same gender being in love wasn't so alien a concept. I think that we are the ones with the fear so we should call it what it is. Perceive the following:

Heterophobia: The irrational fear that the smallest show of affection between homosexuals in public will result in a frenzied and rabid attack by all heterosexuals in the area, up to four blocks away, or who might be about to turn the corner.

A related disease, hetero-employment-phobia is the fear that if an employed homosexual holds the

hand of their partner while driving their car within two blocks of their boss' office before midnight they will be fired by morning.

Bare with me if you think I'm picking on many people's perfectly rational caution regarding gay-bashing and the slim protection we have as gays in the workforce. I would like to explore the extremes of the distrust we have for our fellow humans (we'll leave the bashers and inciters out of this for a while.)

You don't notice until you relax a little, but 50% of heterosexuals who pass openly lesbian couples on the street don't even see the held hands, or they completely disregard the arms around each other as one of those things "girl-friends" do on their way to pick out silly joke gifts for the baby shower. The invisibility thing we have that can be infuriating sometimes does come in quite handy here.

10% of the remainder of the passers-by don't know what to do with, and refuse to process the information their eyes give them, and end up passing by in a daze as they try to develop more suitable scenarios for what they must have seen: "Was that two women, or could one have been a guy?...which one?...maybe the short one...maybe it was two men...was that my husband?...no, he would have said hello..." Most don't snap out of these dazes until

supper is on the table that night and for want of conversation they bring it up: "Did I see you at the mall today?"

You can count on 25% being gay positive. These are the people who are well settled in their own sexuality, so aren't afraid you'll paw all over them. They either support the bucking of the heterosexist system, or they simply don't care (Usually, when someone truly doesn't care what orientation you are, they don't feel compelled to state it over and over again, so you may not be aware of them.)

5% of the passers-by are conservative clergy of a variety of denominations, and COR members. You, and your act will appear in the next sermon, or letters-to-the-editor page of the gleaner (ho-hum), so if they stop you to ask your name, just tell them you're "Friends of Dorothy."

Of course the other 10% are gay. Mind you, some gays, who are desperately afraid of being caught, or who are miserable from trying to "get over it" all their lives, might attempt to play the ultra-het role. This happens every once in a while. Hopefully, as our society becomes more educated, these people will learn to like themselves a little. They will stop trying to behave the way they think heterosexuals behave and may even hold hands with someone they love.