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Welcome

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

"Never cut what can

be untied," and "Use the good silver."



I now have seventy wild and restless years under my belt. I grew up in the suburbs built after we won the War, with patios and a barbeque, in a ranch house in a community called - I am not making this up. - Green Acres. My dad was in the Medical Corps during the war; my mother was trained as a designer with a degree from Moore Institute of Art in Philadelphia. They belonged to the country club and dressed occasionally for a night "on the town," looking utterly glamorous to their daughter "too tall, too many freckles and too many feelings." I couldn't do anything about those qualities then, and I still cannot.

After Peace Corps Brazil, at age 25, I left my roots and my first husband and drove 10,000 miles headed, more or less, west. I picked up hitchhikers and took them where they were going, stretching out the miles and months before I finally reached San Francisco. There I met up with a house full of former Peace Corps Volunteers and hippies who lived and loved communally in the Haight. No drugs, really. I never liked, and I still don't like losing control, though I did drop acid one night on Pismo Beach and saw the incredible movements of stars and the slow shifting of sand in the night wind.

At the Pacific, and since my VW bug didn't float, I turned right and headed up the Coast Highway to Oregon. I'd read about the state in the first book I ever chose for myself at the school library and decided right then that I would become a *Pigtail Pioneer*. North I went, and turned east driving along a fork of the Smith River into Grants Pass Oregon. I had the names of a couple, Seattleites with MSWs, who'd "dropped out" to a cabin in the wilderness, so I set off to find them. Spent the next year learning how to build wood fires, grow vegetables, and get to the outhouse in the rain and snow.

Then missed my profession - teaching - in a most terrible way. I'd wanted to be a teacher since 2nd grade, Mrs. Kitchen's class. She had us make shadow boxes about "early man" and read aloud to us from *Kon Tiki*, a book on the New York Times best-seller list. Winifred Kitchen had traveled the world with her husband who was a physician for the American Red Cross and she taught "up" to us - encouraging, giving us credit. When I told her one day that I wanted to "go to the Principal's office" without being sent there, she made time for me to go. I talked with the Principal at her desk and then the Principal left me "in charge" of her office, sitting in her chair and answering the phone! I was always ambitious, bossy, elected "the leader" because I was tall. Safety Patrol Captain, too.

I sent in my application and accompanying letter (A two page, hand-written autobiographical poem. Terrible poetry, but the naked truth.) A feisty principal who was looking for diversity

among his staff hired me. It was the 70's and so I taught English "electives" - Sports Literature, American Indian Literature, a Sensitivity Training class titled "You and Me." Two years and I was ready to travel again. Spent six months in the British Isles, and on the islands of Scotland. Then a winter cruise trip to the Canary Islands, where I met sun-lovers from northern Europe, hanging out with groups of souls in a kind of sun worshipping tribe.

During those months I was trying to stay in touch with a man I truly loved, a native Oregonian who'd never been east of Utah but who said he'd meet me in Europe after I traveled a while solo. From London I sent him a card, "I'll Love You Forever or 40,000 Miles, Whichever Comes First." We lost touch for months, but he was on my mind. I returned to Oregon and in the space of a few hours heard three differing stories about his status: "He went to Europe to meet you." "He sold everything, including his truck, and left town." "He's living on Cottage Street just across from the Park." It took a day or so, but then we reconnected and have been together ever since.

And now, just recently, I've reconnected with about ten high school friends who have stayed in and out of touch over the last fifty years. We had a reunion this fall near our Pennsylvania home-town. Four hilarious days, cooking together, sleeping on cots in our friends' cabin, passing around the Susquehanna Township Senior High yearbook. What a hoot to share the accumulated stories and gossip we know and to look forward to our 50th reunion in the near future.

I no longer feel safe picking up hitchhikers, but I do talk to strangers - in line at the PO, those on their way to the riverfront walkway, those sitting on benches, the homeless, those wearing suits and ties. We are lucky to live in a country not experiencing a war on our own soil, but I am ashamed of the wars we're currently supporting and all the money wasted on armaments and bombs. I'm 70, and I know better than this about what matters: family and friends, the environment, and the everlasting search for compassion and the peaceable, negotiated path.

For all of this, I give thanks.

ANN STALEY
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