

Feder: Celebrating life – shamelessly and joyfully

Contributed by Mandy Feder
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Regardless of how old I get, I am simply juvenile about my birthday. I shamelessly announce it and absorb the well wishes.

Maybe it's because in order to enter the world I battled an IUD victoriously. My brother Steve, 13 months my senior, was a diaphragm baby.

I woke up Thursday morning to my friend Carol singing happy birthday in two languages. My boy, Rex, now more than 6 feet tall, grinned and sang to me as he was on his way out to school and punched his friend Payton in the arm, who ran back to say, "Hey, Mandy, happy birthday."

I saw my daughter Nicole's grocery list on the counter, which consisted of ingredients for my favorite soup, hot and sour, and at the bottom of the list it said, "cake mix." Next to the list was a bottle of my favorite red wine accompanied by a card from my housemate Dave.

I cannot recall anything, at any age that got in the way of enjoying my day. Some people don't like getting older. They deny it, fight it, ignore it or reject it.

My friend Charlette from high school greeted me on Facebook with this: "Happy birthday. 43 huh? Who would have thunk it? I remember being 17 and thinking 30 was ancient. When I have cocktails this weekend, I will dedicate a lemon drop to you :) I just got back into town. Do you have any plans for a birthday celebration? I am letting birthdays pass quietly these last few years. No need for all the hoopla. Mahalo."

She's at least as beautiful as she was in school and the years certainly lend wisdom to us all.

I am celebrating this year quietly at home, but happily with friends and family. I am writing this as a respite or departure from political, social and economic issues of the time, because this is my day.

Though others share the same date of birth, some even the same year, like my accountant Christine, nobody shares the same experiences as I do. That indeed makes me an individual.

Each year my dad points out my age, "Boy you're getting old he says." I tell him that must make him super-old; after all, I am the youngest of his three children.

On a more mature note, my birthday is a time when I can assess what I have contributed to the world thus far and what I would like to, or intend to, contribute in the year ahead. I think about the places I've lived, people I've known and memories created. This year I'm grateful that I saw my favorite Uncle Mark and got to know my cousins and aunt. I was surprised at how much we mean to each other even after many years.

I made a list of aspirations and a list of resolutions. I thank my parents as if I were accepting an Academy Award, "I would just like to thank you for making this all possible," type of thing.

This year I wish that everyone find a day for themselves, a day to set humility aside and celebrate life shamelessly and joyfully.

"In life we need three things, a wishbone, a backbone and a funny bone."

Mandy Feder is a contributing writer and columnist for Lake County News.

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