

The milestone birthdays have never bothered me; nor have they usually meant anything significant. Fifty is different. This second half-century doesn't scare me, but I am acutely aware of the passing of time. I see people older than me who are not only incredibly vital, but also are slowing down in some ways. The paradoxes of life seem ever more apparent to me, including that one can have a sharp mind and feel young—even in what's called the elderly years. And yet, we're not immortal. That paradox is more and more apparent, and has implications for living—at least it does to me.

I had a truly wonderful birthday. On Thursday I shopped for dinner ingredients, with my mom and my eldest niece as companions. We savored all the unusual and amazing scents and sights at Big John's PFI. We ate lunch at Maximilien's, my favorite restaurant in the Pike Place Market, where I indulged my love of escargot. We pattered in the adjacent urban garden, taking in not only the brilliant views of Elliott Bay, but the minor sights of funky garden art next to a wall of hanging strawberry plants.

On Friday, my youngest brother, Greg—an accomplished cook—helped me prepare homemade sauce and meatballs along with our ambition for the day: arancini, or savory deep fried rice balls. We reminisced about our first tastings of this delight, and gloated to ourselves when they turned out so well! When Greg said earlier in the week that he couldn't actually come help me, due to some work commitments, I took a deep breath and thought: OK, it's OK. I'll handle it. When he told me Friday morning he was on his way to my house, because he knew I'd be alone, I was excited—because part of my vision of my birthday was to cook together. At the end of the day when we were both exhausted, I was elated—because I would NEVER have been able to do it alone. That was an unexpected gift: the reminder that I don't have to do things alone.

Saturday was dinner with family & friends, and Sunday an open house at Discovery Park. From my brothers and sister-in-law who pitched in in a major way to help with setting up the two venues, to my parents who put together a slideshow of my life, to Carrie, whose support & extroversion kept me centered and able to just be myself in the midst of A LOT of people...to all those who came and celebrated—a HUGE THANK YOU. My birthday weekend was exactly as I had hoped it would be. I even won the bocce ball game fair & square, and it didn't rain!

I'm grateful to have good health, family and friends who love me, and meaningful work. I look forward to future years, to discovering what other surprises, challenges, and vocations await. I was looking through some old photos from my college days, smiling at those years of being a young adult, also surrounded by great friends and the hopefulness of life to come.

I'm feeling pretty grounded and lucky; even as the decades have brought many changes and challenges, I have had a great five decades so far. I hope I continue to live life fully, in my own way, not squander time, and be a generous person toward others. Thank you all for being in my life.

*Deb*

