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Coming of (Older) Age

My mother was crying when I came home from school, and for me at eight years old, that was shocking. She told me that a neighbor had died of cancer.

“She was such a young woman,” she said through her tears.

“How old was she?” I asked, picturing a teenager, who would be about the oldest young person that I could imagine.

“Thirty eight.”

I was outraged. Thirty eight! That was practically prehistoric. Why she was almost as old as my mother!

Years later when I was in my twenties, I danced with a repertory modern dance group, and was surprised to learn that one of our best dancers was an ancient thirty-five, and even though all of us younger dancers liked her, we didn't include her in our get-togethers, thinking she was too old. I eventually moved away and stopped dancing. It was some twelve years later when I was an over-the-hill forty, that I joined another repertory group and realized how young both of those women had been. And me? I still felt like I was sixteen, although it was a bit tougher to get into shape.

And that was many years ago. I figured by the time I got to my age, I'd have all the answers and everything would be a done deal, but I'm finding that even though I am middle-aged, I and many of my contemporaries, are more like teenagers than we'd like to admit. We're still searching for answers, many of us still transitioning in and out of relationships, or struggling in career changes. We'd like to think we're wiser than teenagers and for me, I can definitely say that I've learned lessons along the way and am *somewhat* wiser and definitely smarter, but some of the issues that I see baby-boomers struggle with are pretty similar to those who are coming of age. We're just coming to an older age.

Sometimes those struggles can be overwhelming and it feels like a low pressure system has moved in all I can see is doom and gloom in the future; once I'm over the hill, there's not much left but down hill. This year I spent the month of March in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico and had lots of opportunities to mingle with charter members of AARP who have retired there. To my surprise, I found this group lively and interesting, proving to me that you are only as old as you feel, and I came home feeling energized and there are still lots of adventures ahead. This is echoed by older friend of mine who always says “Say yes to the adventure,” And at sixty-one, with a new retirement house and a new girl friend, and the biggest smile you'll ever see.

My son is twenty-five and a chef. He knew what he is talking about when he removed a stubborn pistachio from my hands that I'd been trying to open to no avail.

“Life is too short for nuts that won't open,” he said, proving him one of the wiser souls I've encountered in my life, and proving again that age has nothing to do with

wisdom. I'd like to think that I've learned a little to go with my wrinkles, but sometimes, I'm not so sure.

Although I still feel like I'm sixteen in my head, physically my repertory dance days are over, at least from the scary side of the stage. Now my physical challenges are on the yoga matt. There is a pose called wheel, which is a full backbend and something I could easily manage in my twenties, but haven't even been able to get off of the ground for years. I decided that I would try it again since I'll never get there if I don't, and I was amazed when I pushed up and actually raised my back off the matt. Not all the way up, but it was a start and I have lots of years ahead of me to work on it.