



## Publisher's Pen

Dear Readers,

I was overcome last week when responding to an e-mail from a business friend.

She wrote in the context of considering a career change, "I've had a successful career. My children have all graduated from college and are on their own – as much as any children are *ever* on their own. My parents are in their 80's in the East and a part of me thinks I should be closer to them. I have lots of decisions to make."

I advised, "The situation with your parents is one I can identify with and fully understand. I hope I'm not intruding when I tell you to make the most of these years with them. Jay and I have lost both our parents and how I wish that I had spent more time with them, been less short tempered and more understanding in their final years. And we never know how quickly those 'final years' will come. You are embarking on a new era of your life. Follow your heart."

And the tears raced uncontrollably down my cheeks.

My friend Steven several years ago referred to himself as an orphan. Having lost both his parents – not in childhood, but as an adult – he felt profoundly sad – empty.

I must admit, the word "orphan" was not one I'd use to describe *my* circumstances. But that sense of loss – and at the same time clinging to cherished memories – sneak into my consciousness with no warning.

I asked L.H., "Have I written

about this before – or is it that I've so often offered this advice to friends so fortunate to still have their parents – and urged them to do what I wish I had done?

My mother was the model mother/wife/daughter/daughter-in-law for her generation. Her life was about nurturing. Caring for everyone. She cared for her parents and in-laws until their passing. For her children – until we grew and left the nest. All those many years, she was the steadfast support for her husband, my father.

Mom and Dad relocated to Florida in their later years – East Coast snowbird country. Come to think of it – they weren't much older that I am today.

Shocked the hell out of us when Daddy – the healthy one – died suddenly. Mom outlived him for close to ten years.

As the aging process took over and her health deteriorated, I found myself flying cross country at the drop of a hat – at a time when I had a young child and a world of responsibilities in Arizona.

Her health was failing. The tables had turned. My turn to care for her.

We sold her apartment in Florida with most of its furniture and moved her to the Valley to be near us. She had become quite infirmed and required full time nursing care.

After a year in a nursing care facility, one day she rallied! It was as if a fog had lifted. She seemed like her old self – complete with sense of humor.

There was no rational explanation. It just was what it was. It was as if she was starting over!

We rented a darling apartment for her in a senior residence and furnished it with all new things. What fun we had shopping! We mixed in some of her precious memorabilia and family photos – and voilà! Home.

No sooner did we have her settled, Mom, always the flirt (that's where I get *that* from!) met herself a guy! She was in her mid-80s. Al was a "younger man" – merely *pushing* 80 –

and very tall! Mom liked tall.

They were the most adorable pair to watch. They were like teenagers. They'd hold hands. She'd cuddle into him on the sofa. They'd have lunch together in the common dining room – go to the ice cream shoppe and share a sundae – gazing endlessly into each other's eyes. Maybe because they couldn't see very well. Whatever the reason, it warmed my heart and brought me joy.

She was so very happy. They were so beautiful together. How extraordinary this was.

After seven short months of her newfound youth – her health took a dramatic turn. Al visited her every day in the nursing home. Fed her meals. Took her for strolls in her wheelchair.

And she passed.

How I wish I could undo the times that I was short tempered. The times I was "too busy" to simply go to lunch and hang out. The times I scolded my father for chewing with his mouth open. The times my stress was more imperative to me than their feelings.

When I witness a daughter being sort tempered with her mother – I just want to go over there and shake her. The daughter – not the mother!

My dear friend's father is ailing. He has been diagnosed – well not *diagnosed* – as he won't go to a doctor

for a diagnosis – but it is clear that he is failing. It is a blessing in its own way for her to be forewarned that time is short.

In *her* life that overfloweth with a myriad of responsibilities she is making the time to be with him. To talk. To reminisce. To perhaps smooth misunderstandings and maybe the times she may have misspoken.

How precious are these times.

We think that they'll be here forever. That there'll always be time.

Hear this, my friends. They will not. You will not. The time is *now*.

If you are blessed to still have your loved ones – love them and tell them so. Today. Resolve those unresolved issues. Apologize for those things you should apologize for.

Now.

Heed the message in John Mayer's song, "Say," heard in the film, *The Bucket List*:

"You better know that in the end It's better to say too much

"Than never to say what you need to say..."

"Say what you need to say."

Warmest Regards,

Hope H. Ozer  
Publisher

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