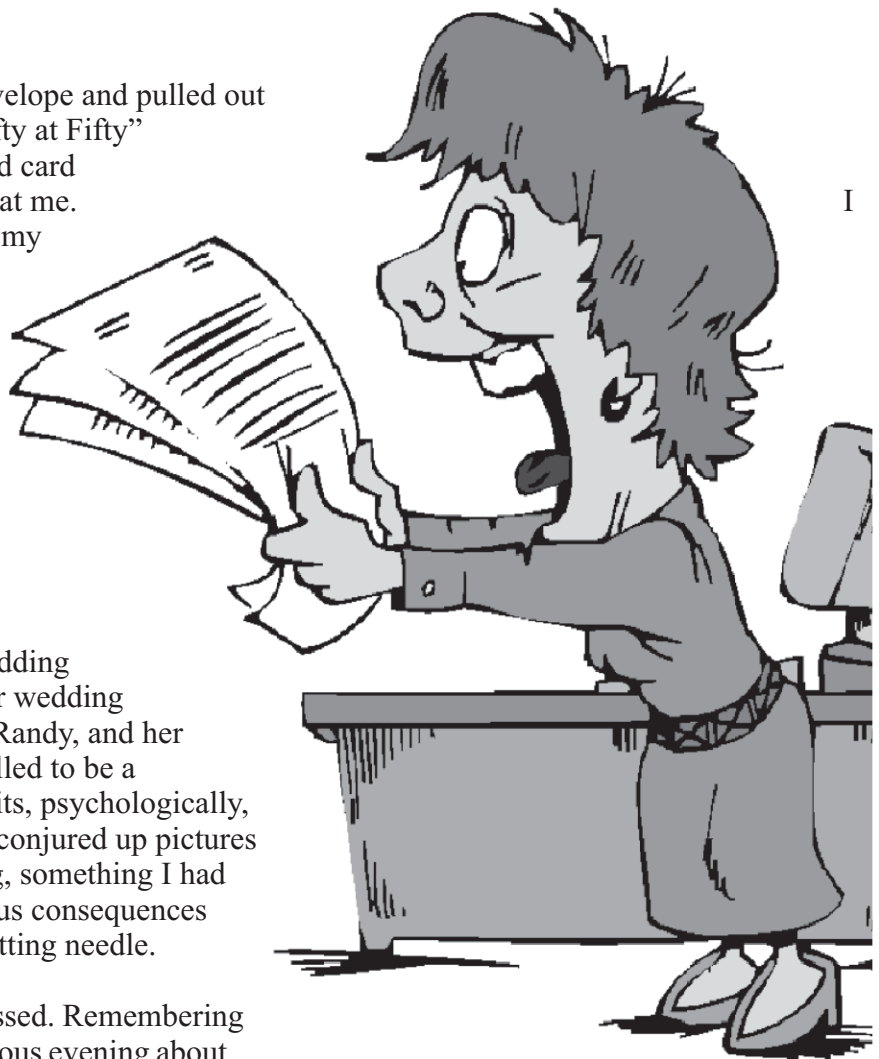


Nifty at 50

I tore open yet another long white envelope and pulled out the contents, the predictable “Still Nifty at Fifty” stared at me from the gaudily coloured card with its inane cartoon face leering up at me. I opened it to discover it was from Jill, my neighbour. Sighing, I placed it alongside the array of good wishes from other friends and relatives. They all showed middle aged females in varying forms of decomposition, apart that is, from the one with its lurid fluorescent green badge proclaiming “fifty and proud of it”. On balance, I thought I preferred the decaying women.

On the mantelpiece, alongside the wedding photograph of me and Brendan on our wedding day, was the picture of our daughter, Randy, and her new baby, Isabel. Although I was thrilled to be a grandmother, and loved the baby to bits, psychologically, being “granny” is very depressing. It conjured up pictures of white haired old ladies and knitting, something I had tried only the once with such disastrous consequences that I had never again picked up a knitting needle.

I went back to the bedroom to get dressed. Remembering the article I had been reading the previous evening about cosmetic surgery, I heaved my ample bosom up to see



I

whether a boob job would make a vast difference to the effects of fifty years of gravity. Looking in the mirror, all I had succeeded in achieving was a soft pillow for my second chin to rest on. Oh well, I would just have to stick to the Gossard balcony bra to provide the necessary scaffolding apparatus to contain my curves. Perhaps I should try a tummy tuck, but another glance in the mirror confirmed my fear that even an industrial fork lift truck might have a problem heaving all my wobbly bits into the right places, and that would only be after serious liposuction!

I opened my underwear drawer and pulled out my comfortable and sensible knickers. How on earth today's young girls managed to cope with thongs was beyond me. You couldn't even work out which bit to put your legs into without the aid of a labelled diagram. I comforted myself with the thought that Hugh Grant had been turned on by Bridget Jones' big pants. I walked down the stairs for breakfast, depressing myself by wondering how long it would be before I had to think of installing a stair lift to make this journey.

Wandering into the kitchen, I pulled a bowl from the cupboard, and emptied the end of a box of bran flakes into it. These were chosen carefully by me at the supermarket for their high fibre content and added vitamins designed to stave off the inevitable age related medical conditions. Pouring on the low fat milk, I marvelled that once upon a time my body had actually coped with full fat dairy milk and cocoa pops. As I picked up a spoon to eat I opened her copy of FIFTY magazine which was lying on the table, having arrived this morning as a birthday present joke from my friend Tina. I had finally given up on Cosmo when it started to make me feel inadequate both in the kitchen and the bedroom, especially when it combined the two activities and suggested uses for chocolate I hadn't contemplated even in my wildest fantasies. I had switched to "The Domestic Female" as a less threatening alternative; gloomily I thought I might now have to make do with FIFTY.

Crunching my way through the bran flakes, thinking about how long it might be before my teeth protested and I had to settle for sloppy porridge instead, my

eye was caught by an article about fifty year old women and incontinence. "Dear God" I breathed, not that as well. For the cost of a postage stamp, you could receive one free continence pad. Quickly I flipped the page over and started to read about "planning for the funeral you want". I hadn't realised that fifty was so far advanced that I had to plan my funeral. When I turned the page and read "Have you made your will?" I decided to put off any further depressing news for another day. Being fifty was obviously a very serious time of life.

Putting my hand in my pocket, I pulled out the one letter I hadn't opened yet. I didn't open it at once; I knew exactly who it was from. It was from Wilkins, the garage in the next town. My new car was ready for collection today. I had ordered it months ago, when the kids and Brendan had suggested that as I was nearly fifty, I get herself a more sensible car than my sporty 206. I had listened very carefully, and taken their words to heart, going to the garage that very afternoon and ordering my new vehicle. I had negotiated my way to a very good price, and had received a year's tax and a manufacturer's warranty. Brendan told me how sensible I had been. Now the day had arrived for its collection, appropriately enough my 50th birthday. I walked into the garage and signed the paperwork. Mr Brent, the salesman, opened the car door for me and I climbed in.

Leaning back in the seat, I started the engine. The bright red sports car purred as my foot went down on the accelerator. I sped onto the motorway and soon touched 100mph. Exhilarated and laughing to myself, I opened the bar of high fat milk chocolate and turned up Radio One as loud as I could. Blow it, fifty – who cared. I pressed the button for the roof to go down and tossed my greying hair laughing as the wind caught it and blew it around my fifty year old face. Fifty was definitely a state of mind I wasn't going to enter into just yet!

Liz Bourne is an author and freelance trainer writing articles and books both for fun and for self help and training. She also writes training workshops for other people to teach as well as designs and delivers workshops herself.

<http://www.bourne-to-train.co.uk>
<http://getmanagingpeople.blogspot.com>
<http://articlecity.com>