Wok & Roll

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**Age doesn’t matter if you live in the moment**

It is amazing, I received two separate emails from two different friends the same day. The names and the settings are different, yet the message is the same.

It is about an elderly lady who attended college in her later years. I don’t remember the exact script, but somehow, the storyline and the message are the same.

It is set in a classroom with new college students, all young, enthusiastic and eager to learn. When the professor asked the students to turn around and introduce themselves to their classmates, there was this elder lady who just sat in the corner and smiled at everyone.

When Johnny, who sat in front of her, introduced himself, she smiled and said, “Oh, handsome, can I give you a hug?” He gave her the biggest bear hug, and out of curiosity, asked her, “Ma’am, just what you’re doing here? You should be resting at your home.”

She smiled and said, “Oh, I’m here looking for a rich husband; get married, and maybe have a couple of children.” The whole class just giggled.

“Seriously,” Johnny persisted, “Why are you here at your age?”

The lady smiled and said, “Yes, I am 84 years old and my name is Harriet. Maybe I should be sitting in my rocker at home and staring out the window all day, feeling lonely and sad; but I choose to do something different. All my life I wanted a college education, but I didn’t have the opportunity or the time; I was busy raising a family and working a part-time job to help put food on the table. Now the kids are grown and my dear husband is gone, I think it is time to fulfill my dream.”

The whole class was silent, listening to this lovely elderly lady’s story. The professor was touched, and invited her to speak more about herself in front of the class.

“Oh no,” she exclaimed, “I gave up beer for Lent, and this whiskey is killing me. I’m a bit jittery right now.”

Encouraged by the classmates and the professor, she finally took up the courage and talked to the class.

“Well, my name is Harriet and I am 84 years old. Yes, I should have, or could have sat at home, feeling lonely and sad, but I simply refuse to do that.

“Yes, we stop playing and learning because we are getting old. Yet, I feel that we are getting old because we stop playing and learning. Yes, I’m getting older each day, but I don’t want to grow older.

“It’s never too late to do something exciting and to learn something new. Most people fear death because they have a lot of regrets. I do not want to have any regrets when I go. I enjoy living.

“I love to laugh at life and find humor in life. That has been my dream to have a college education, it is never too late. Have a dream, and follow it, no matter when, no matter how. Thank you all for having me here.”

The class gave her a standing ovation. She did manage to get her degree and passed away a year after her graduation.

Wow, what an inspiring story indeed. Same story, but different versions, yet the message is the same — we all get older, that’s mandatory, we have no choice; yet, we have a choice of not growing older by staying young.

It is not about age, but how we feel and how we think of life itself. The good Lord is most fair, each of us has a package of a heavy load to carry, it is how we treat the package that matters.

We can dwell on how we were brought up, how we were treated as kids, as teenagers, as adults and keep crying, “Woe is me, woe is me.”

Or we have a choice to tell ourselves, what was, was. There’s nothing we can do about the past, what’s gone is gone and the future, we have no idea what it is going to be.

Looking at the stars at night, with billions and billions of galaxies above us, we’re living in a tiny speck of eternity. Our past, present and future are all existing in a blink of an eye in the master of eternity.

So, when we cannot do anything about the past, and there is nothing we can do about tomorrow, what shall we do? What shall we do?

As Harriet would say, live in the moment, enjoy the moment, do what you can to make something for yourself this very moment.

“Impossible Dream” is not just a song if you dare to sing it out loud. Why not? Why can’t I? Why, why, why? Who is the final judge anyway?

I’ve written something about the spirit of spiders and Harriet is truly a Spider Woman. How many people (including her friends, neighbors and family members) would tell her to just enjoy her retirement years, to just sit home and let the days go by?

No, she said, I want to spend the rest of my life living, do what I want, and to accomplish my dreams before I go. Never did she mention anything about money, driving a fancy car, or living in a luxurious mansion.

So, what’s your dream? What do you want to accomplish in your lifetime

There’s a Harriet in every one of us. What makes us happy? We all want to be a millionaire, but does having a lot of money give us happiness? (Well, yes, sometimes).

I read about tons of billionaires who went bankrupt or died penniless just because. Makes you wonder, doesn’t it? All the money in the world can’t buy happiness?

A good lesson from Harriet, getting old is mandatory; but growing old is optional. We’ll never grow old if our hearts are young.

Maybe it is time to learn sky diving?