

Barbara's Final Column

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Fighting pirates with the Lost Boys

By Barbara Anderson



Darn, I knew this was going to happen someday.

If you're reading this, I'm dead.

"Second star to the right and on 'til morning" — now I never have to grow up, much less grow old.

I was in the autumn of my life. I figure that the years until I became a mother were spring, then there was summer til about 50,

then autumn til death, which may be a lot like winter: you hibernate until the next spring comes around and you get another chance to enjoy the seasons. Unless autumn gets extended because you don't die when you really ought to, and hang around deteriorating because the government thinks you don't have a right to die when you want.

If, despite my living will and various plans to control my dying, I end up hanging around, then I curse the government for the last time, though certainly not the only.

When I was a teenager I saw my favorite play on television for the first time. In the final act of Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," Emily has died, but gets to go back for one last look around. When she returns to the cemetery where other souls are waiting "for something they know is coming," she cries "Oh earth, you're too wonderful for anyone to realize you," then asks the Stage Manager, "Do any human beings ever realize life as they live it, every, every minute?"

He replies that some do, the saints and poets, maybe.

I made up my mind right then and there to be a poet (no, not a saint; don't be silly). I did write some poetry. However, that's not what he meant.

Poets are people who pay attention. I think I did pretty much realize life as I lived it. And certainly I lived it as I wanted, at least til recently, when I wish I had more time to participate in local events.

Not that I made a lot of decisions: I rarely opened doors, preferring to enjoy what I was doing until I wandered through a door that happened to be ajar into a new adventure. But I did know from childhood that I wanted to write, fall in love, have a son named Lance, and travel in Europe.

I actually married two wonderful men who made excellent ex-husbands, had a good long-term relationship with my friend John, and spent an intriguing autumn with my partner Chip Ford. My son Lance and his wife Mary

gave me twin grandchildren Aidan and Maya — the frosting on the cake of my life. And I lived in Greece and traveled throughout Europe; also crossed the United States several times and visited Mexico, Canada and Australia.

Along with a recent wonderful family visit to my hometown area in western Pennsylvania, these were my favorite vacation places: Mexico, Delphi, Hawaii, Paris, Mesa Verde, the ancestral farm in Croatia, Death Valley and Safari West with my family, fjords in Ireland and Norway, the Great Barrier Reef, and the mountain in Switzerland that I climbed alone one day and found God. If you're interested, God is a glacier which melts into an icy stream that flows to the sea, nourishing all that it touches and eventually recycling itself into snow falling on a glacier. Well, maybe you had to have been there.

Having promised Peter Pan that I wouldn't grow up, I could never answer the question "what do you want to be when..." but volunteer activism became a lifetime career as a taxpayer advocate, which let me hang out with the lost boys and fight pirates.

Spent quality time with my cats and in my Marblehead garden; enjoyed reading, television and music, good conversation with family and friends, food and ice cream sodas. Enjoyed almost everything, come to think of it; mother said this was genetic, a gift from my father.

After all that, it would seem ungrateful to complain about having to die, wouldn't it.

Must mention the excellent care I received, (as I write this), from Dr. Dennis O'Connor, my chiropractor; the Partners System, especially the North Shore Cancer Center, and must tell you to check out the Urgent Care Center in Danvers, go online and make a same-day appointment for a sudden problem (not emergency). We on the North Shore are fortunate not to have to drive into Boston!

Thank you, The Salem News and Eagle-Tribune, for running my columns, and to those who read them.

There will be no memorial service but if anyone wants to honor my memory, please remind Gov. Charlie Baker that when he was running for office, he promised my friend Gerald Amirault and his family that getting Gerald off parole and his ankle bracelet would be a first order of business. So far he has broken his promise, and keeping it is my dying wish.