

Hard to Believe. I'm 70

By Carol Hitchie



Photo: Karen Hirsch

Over the many years I've ridden the city bus but no one ever offered me their seat. So the first time is a bit disconcerting, like a warning of some certain doom.

It's a few years ago and I'm on the city bus heading home, wearing a short tennis skirt and pink *Life is Good* visor, my racquet slung over one shoulder. I've wormed myself halfway down the crowded bus, grabbed a ceiling strap and braced myself against a bumping ride.

"Would you like to sit down?" I hear someone ask.

I'm gazing thoughtfully out of the bus's windows at the passing park, running through today's game in my mind and how my serve needs work.

"Ma'am? Would you care to sit down?" the voice asks again. I look down and realize this young man (when did I start using the term 'young man?') is talking to me. My eyes widen and I catch my breath. 'He's talking to you!' shouts a voice in my head and I frantically look around for a place to hide. The young man (there I go again) starts to get up.

"No, really, I'm fine", I tell him shakily, feeling uncomfortable at possibly embarrassing us both. "But thank you." I'm very warm and sense that everyone is staring at me – the old lady with a tennis racquet in a shamefully short skirt.

That was a few years ago yet the question buried in my ego pops up now and then. Was it because you're old or was it just someone being chivalrous. And why does it bother me so much?

But now I'm suddenly 70 and everything seems different.

It's a feeling of loss, something that didn't happen at 30 or 40. Not even at 50 or 60—"zero" year birthdays that are celebrated with crude cards, jokes and warnings of going down some treacherous hill.

In my late 20s, people warned 'wait until you're 30!' So on my 30th birthday, I stood very still in the middle of my living room, closed my eyes and waited for something to happen. Nothing and I wondered what all the fuss was about. Ditto at 40, 50 and even 60. Life simply went on.

But at 70, something happened and suddenly everyone is younger. The world speeds up and I'm convinced that if I don't pay constant attention, I'll be stranded in a strange, lonely place by a younger world that's left without me.

Is it the Internet? Social media? Too much information?

Or is it that so much today is simply not important anymore? At 70, do we instead seek out a slower pace, a simpler life, a safer place? Or are we stubbornly fighting to hold on to our youth in fear that by losing our grip just a little, life will slip away forever, leaving nothing but darkness.

What is it about being suddenly 70?

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