

Balancing Act

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Tonight I went out to dinner to celebrate the 70th birthday of a dear friend and at 75 (almost 76) was able to...well, not to impart wisdom, that's for sure!...but to look back and remember age 70, which was just yesterday. Or maybe last Thursday.

Things that have changed for me in the past five years—apart from the obvious—are that I have quit both skiing and horseback riding. There were subtle...okay, not so subtle...hints that my sense of balance was not as good as it once was. In short, that I was suddenly in danger of falling off the same horse I once felt very much at home upon...or of ending up in a snowbank with my skis cross-crossed above my head.

Here I am at Aspen maybe 15 years ago. And here I am, on horseback in Montana 5 years ago.

It is good, I've discovered, if you are able to laugh at yourself. Like the time not long ago when I was alone, on snowshoes, outside my Maine farmhouse, and fell in the deep snow, and couldn't get up. That's right: could not get up. I sprawled there, laughing, and then found myself thinking two opposing thoughts at the same time. A friend was inside the house, and I found myself thinking: *I hope she looks out the window, and comes out to give me a hand;* and at the same time: *I hope she doesn't look out the window and see what a complete idiot I look like.*

It takes you by surprise when things begin to diminish. But other things become, oddly, enhanced. The enjoyment of a wonderful book, or a concert, or a dinner with an old friend. My amusement at a cat's antics (mine just jumped on a table, overturned a saltshaker, and scared herself). Life's pleasures are still enormous...just somewhat different. *The balance of things has changed.*





Mary's daughter, the author, and a close friend from the Alps. Photo by Saw Francisco after