

In the neighborhood column
October 2009

Where have all the flowers gone, long time passing? Last month we lost one more icon of the boomer generation. Mary Travers of Peter, Paul and Mary succumbed to leukemia. Many of this group's ballads were background music for our lives and times. Sadly, many of this generation's icons left us this year.

Although he never ate a bite, Walter Cronkite was a guest at our house every night at dinner time, his passing felt like losing a dear family member. I didn't have her pin-up poster in my locker, but I coveted her blond locks and her Ford Cobra was my dream car in high school. Our angel, Farrah Fawcett was someone to envy and admire all at the same time, now this dream girl, so much bigger than life is gone. How can that be? I remember seeing him and his brothers on the Ed Sullivan Show. Their wide afro hair and bell bottom pants, and that sound coming from a kid my age, wow what a talent. His songs were always a part of my youth, *I'll Be There*, *ABC*, *Ben*, and later as I started my professional career, his was at its zenith with the *Off the Wall* album and of course *Thriller*. We grew up together in time. Michael Jackson, another icon of my times; the forever boy has died, surreal indeed. This year, the last year in the first decade of the new millennium has been especially hard, facing the reality that I too am older, my life is more than half over. Nothing makes you feel your own mortality more than seeing the familiar people of your life and times slip away.

It is difficult to believe, that in a few months, this decade will be over. Y2K happened ten years ago. The wars have been going on for over seven years. When George Bush said we'd be there as long as it takes, even he didn't imagine it would be this long. Yet, sometimes it feels like this happened a couple months ago. How can that much time and money have gone by so quickly? Time seems to fly by so quickly when you get older, and so many memories are behind, filling up space in your existence it seems to propel time. I never thought I would ever be this old so quickly, or that my children would grow up so soon. Like the song lyrics from *Fiddler on the Roof*, "I don't remember growing older, when did they"?

This decade has been especially hard, and it seems getting older involves loss. Loss of youth of course, loss of hair and natural color, loss of hearing, loss of clear vision; and most precious, loss of loved ones. There was a time, a few years ago, when I went to 30 funerals within three years. I lost cousins, aunts and uncles, friends, children of friends, neighbors, and colleagues, and even my beloved kid in the fur coat. Getting older means dealing with loss, measuring time in what passes. Getting older means

appreciating everyday what you have been given, because few things last forever. Getting older means memories, kept alive and shared, I know my children often get annoyed with me when I share memories too often, especially the same ones over and over, but this is how we endure.

Getting older means cherishing the past and hoping for the future. Life is precious, the past is history, the future is a mystery, all we have is here and now; a gift, that's why it's called the present.

Bio

Beverly Wallace, a Greeley native and fifth grade teacher likes to tell her students she came out of the ark with Noah if they inquire about her age. Although her parents have been gone now for over 15 years she sees her mother every morning when she looks in the mirror. She has been recently shocked and dismayed to find that AARP has been courting her for membership.