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Birthday Ambivalence

Today is my birthday. I am 49.

My birthday is always filled with ambivalence as I feel a sense of sadness because my twin brother, Mike, is no longer here on the earth with me. I miss him and regret not spending more time with him and helping him more through his difficult seasons. And strangely enough, today was my adopted parents' wedding anniversary. So I miss my father today, too. I wish I could feel his hug and hear his laugh. And I've lost so many relationships this last year.

And this past year was so difficult. Not a year I would ever want to relive.

Yet birthdays are supposed to be for celebrating. I have much to celebrate.

My marriage is stronger. Eddie and I have endured the storms this year and learned much about ourselves. We have learned new communication skills and better ways to cherish one another. We are finding that as we always knew, marriage is hard work – like all real relationships. But we have found a more precious intimacy with each other that is bringing me much joy.

My children are doing well. Andrew is married and has his own business. I have watched him mature into such a strong, talented young man. I always say he was my best birthday gift ever as he was born on Dec. 9, and I brought him home from the hospital on my birthday. I have always been amazed at what a wonderful person he is in spite of my lack of parenting skills with a first-born child.

His wife, Anna Laura, was a beautiful gift this year. I couldn't have picked a more precious daughter-in-law. I love her as one of mine. Andrew always has the best taste!

Kara Beth graduated from UNA last night. Even though she finished this past summer, she "walked" last night. She graduated summa cum laude. A member of Phi Kappa Phi – the top academic honor society. Got her smarts from her mother! – ha. She is now working on her Master's degree from the University of Alabama and continues to shine there. The best part, though, is her beautiful inside. She helped me so much this last year by telling me I did not have to be strong for her. I could just be real and fall apart when I needed to. From daughter to friend.

Elliott turned 16 last month. He is such a tender, compassionate young man.

He puts his cheek up against mine and hugs me in the sweetest of ways. He “loves” on me every day. What a gift from a 16 year old! I have watched him grow up a lot this year. He is great at communicating his heart. He has chosen some great mentors and friends.

Nathan is my baby. Well, I know he is 13, but he is still my baby. It is amazing to watch his mind tick. Resourceful, intelligent, - a lot like McGyver. The life of the party. He also brings me such joy!

I have the greatest friendships of my life. People who are willing to be real.

My spiritual community is blossoming.

I've found a gift this year as I began writing to express my heart. I've found a great joy in writing. Drawing aside to write is like sitting down with a close friend. It brings me such fulfillment and pleasure.

I am working on a Masters Degree in Professional Counseling. Last year, I learned how much having the right tools to help others can mean. I love being with people and I am so excited about adding another dimension to my understanding of life and people. I am really happy to find I can still “cut the mustard” even though I feel “ancient”.

So if I am ambivalent, I guess it is okay. Great losses and great gains. But I can't really stop the hands of time, can I? I grieve the losses and treasure the gains. And I must believe that 2009 will be a better year and that God will continue His work in me.

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