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title: “butter to the edges”

Scene….stage right: stool, table, wine, glass. Stage left: 3-layer cake on pedestal cake plate on table. stool tray of 70 candles. aerosol cake frosting. Chalkboard behind with a list of “+ and –“…plusses and minuses. “plus” says “not dead”….”minus“ has long list of things.

Mary enters, dancing to “best friend” by queen.

Script…

Ok….i’m so glad you could all come! I need some wine. I love this one. Do you know this one? Duckhorn Sauvignon Blanc. I drink it very cold. It’s crisp; fabulous. Do u all have a glass of wine? We’re going to need alcohol for this. I have a little tequila, too if we need it.

(pours wine. sips, sits)

I brought you all together because I thought we needed to talk about something. Well….I didn’t always think that. At first I thought we shouldn’t talk about it at all and I should just go to Nepal, wrap myself in some gold, indiginous robing, and wait the whole thing out. But then I talked to my old friend, Michael Parisi. He’s a chef. Lives in becket. Do you know him? anyway he said….”well, you know we gays have learned that hiding and secrets don’t work out so well. Be like us. Better to come out of the closet, Mary.”

Better to come out of the closet, mary.

(stands)

So… I am now coming out of the closet and admitting to all of you that today, October 29, 2016, under the sun sign of scorpio, I join the first group of baby boomers to turn… 70. 70!

Fuck!!!!!!!!!!!!

70??????? R u kidding me???? How did that happen? I was just 60! Now I’m fucking 70? Relieved it’s not you, huh! Why do I have to be the first one???? And I know I’m the first one of all of us! Fuck. Since I was a kid…I hate going first!

Fuck! (slugs down a shot of tequila)

(walks over to cake)

This beheomouth of a cake has been created to handle 70 candles. That’s 8 boxes! When do you ever buy eight boxes of candles for one cake?? This took about 50 eggs, a pound of butter and a few quarts of milk! This!!! (takes a taste.) mmmm. Pretty good. Good thing I like cake. Although I know it’s bad for me. You know everytime I eat dessert at dinner, I go to bed worried I’m going to wake up with diabetes. Do u do that? And if I have a little night sweat? I’m in a panic about it. Fuck.

(sits)

Now, why am I making a big deal about this age thing? You’re thinking, “she’s old and she has a cake.” Well, here’s what it is. And I know you guys would never do this….. “you know, mary mott just turned 70. We should really take her to a nice girls lunch to celebrate. Maybe at the red lion.” “We shouldn’t forget about Mary now. With her age thing. I wonder if she’ll start that new meditative water aerobics class at cranwell? Did you hear mary mott had her 70th??? We should probably do something. Maybe take her to a show…if there’s a matinee? Shouldn’t do it this winter. Let’s wait until april. Better footing. Less ice on the sidewalks.” Really? Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

(walks center)

Think about it. If I announced I was transgender…which is how I was thinking of starting this….you’d think that was waaay cool. “hey guys, I’ve been dealing with something for a long time and I feel like I need to talk about it. I’m… transgender. No! just kidding! I’m 70.” I mean, fuck Caitlin Jenner. Really good athlete. She’s about my age…but nobody thinks that because she’s trans. Trans trumps age. If I were coming out, admit it. you’d all be fascinated. Me too! You’d wanna hang out. Have dinner. Do selfies. My dance card would be full. But, I’m turning 70??? Nobody wants a selfie with a 70-year old with original plumbing who isn’t a trans! So not cool!!!! You wanna put me back in the closet. And I don’t blame you.

However…I’m not going to let you do that…

(walks across stage)

After the show we’re going walk out the theater door sit on that wall outside and drink that entire bottle of tequila. Plus I got twelve more cases! And next week we’ll take hip-hop lessons at that place in Housatonic…get our tongues pierced on the way and then, next month we’ll fly to Bhutan for a sweet tea at midnight. We are not going to do anything sensible. Ever. Why start now? Deal? You know…you guys are in this with me. Right? We’re all on the same train. You’re just a few cars back. Remember….seventy is just a number.

(sits on stool. Drinks wine.)

There used to be an ad for southern airlines. Anyone remember southern airlines? From the 70’s? they were sort of like an early Southwest. All one class. So they always compared themselves to other airlines with two classes. their theme was…“you’re never second class on southern”. They won a clio for one of their spots featuring a couple walking up to another plane. (stands and walks forward.) The stewardess and pilot are drinking champagne. Partying. They’re laughing. You’re laughing. The stewardess glances at your ticket and gaily sends you to the back. (walks right) You walk past all this gaiety laughing and toasting. There’s a boombox. People are dancing. Sex is in the air. Then you pass through a thru a black velvet curtain. It cuts to black. Ta-tummm. (walks left.) A dirge is playing. There are Druids. Dirt floor. Bread lines. Beggars with cups. No seats. This is tourist class. This is 70!. That’s what it’s like! Fuck. You walk thru that curtain and all of a sudden, you’re the “older” friend. Not at all like when u got your first black friend or gay friend. Remember? Those are waaaay cooler categories. U wanna hang out with them. You don’t think about taking them to the library….at 3 oclock… on Saturday….for a reading. !

And….even worse …you can’t throw money at age and make it go away. We’ve always been able to rely on that! Right?

(takes a drink of wine)

I mean, I could have a facelift.

(sits….drinks more wine)

I went to see a plastic surgeon in NY recently about having one a few years ago. He’d done demi moore and a few other stars. He sat in front of me, turned my chin right. Turned my chin to the left. He looked me in the eye. Moved his glasses down his nose. “gravity” he said. “You have a serious case of gravity”. I was dumbfounded. Gravity. Wow. What does that mean? That the wrinkles aren’t an issue but my face is melting to my knees?

(drinks wine)

A woman died the other day from a facelift. Which happens a lot. Of course she was doing the whole body. A teeny bit more than the face. That stocking thing where they just pull everything up from your ankles. I think they call it stocking surgery. Like permanent spanx. Ten hour surgery. I’m not lucky. I’d never survive that!

(drinks wine)

So I’m really torn. I think it’s the wrong message for women to feel that they need a facelift to be accepted. I don’t want to send that message to my daughter. That I feel I have to change my face, instead of being proud of all the mileage it shows. But some people, like me, don’t age well. instead of looking like a leathery Marlboro cowboy, puffed with well earned wrinkles… you have the uncool signs of aging… Saggy chin, loose jowly neck, creases between your eye brows, little lines around your mouth, like you’ve been smoking all your life in a trailer park in Mississippi. Fuck. You can’t win.

The gravity thing really comes up when someone wants to take your picture. Which I really hate. I’d prefer there was no record of me from now on. Anyway…when someone takes my picture, I make sure I’m at a table. I lean forward put my fingers on the side of my eyes and hold my chin up. Like this. If we’re all sitting at a table after dinner. Looks good, huh? But hard to do in a standing group photo, though. (stands) You have to stand partly behind somebody, so only one hip shows and you look half your size, and then you rest your chin on their shoulder. (demonstrates). See…it works! Not as good as sitting down, but it works! You know it’s funny… I look back at pictures of myself I hated twenty years ago. I didn’t like my hair. I looked too fat. Now I think I looked sort of hot. Why couldn’t I enjoy it back then?

(moves back to wine. sits)

then…there’s what’s going on inside. Below the neck. the really fucked up part of turning 70. deep inside… you start to realize that even though you’re complaining about the chronology of this. dismissing it. Waxing how unfair it is. You’re the exception. Miss forever forty. you still have a twinge. not one you’d ever admit…that your body feels this change. That you’re actually deserving of this new 70’s moniker. There’s a smidgen of truth in it all. Your body quietly starts to fuck you up. I get a sharp cramp in my rib cage when I bend over to pull up panty hose. I have to have both feet at the same level to get them on so I’m too folded and get a cramp and can’t stand up.

(comes to middle of stage).

And, if you watch me, if we’re in a restaurant, after dinner, I stand in place before I walk. So my knees don’t give me away. You must have noticed. You always see older people limping across the restaurant after dinner. Fuck.

(limps over to cake. Starts frosting.)

I fell down a set of stairs recently on a trip. I was planning a trip to cuba and decided to buy a pair of sensible shoes for all the walking I’d be doing. Ones with a little support. So I went into that store, shooz, in lenox. Walkies. That was the name of the brand. I should have known, they were from England. England is an oxford country. Not a jimmy choo country. No one thinks of the English as having sexy, hip shoes. Anyway, the walkies had velcro on the front and the Velcro overheated in the Cuban sun, and exploded as I decended the stairs into a cute little restaurant. So I did a spectacular leg twisting belly flop. Ending up sprawled on top of a Cuban family with children eating fajitas. Fajitas flying everywhere. Humiliating. And wildly unattractive.

(comes to middle of stage)

The falling isn’t the real problem here. It’s the idea of my going into a shop to buy sensible walking shoes. Who does that? What young person….which one of your kids… thinks about buying sensible shoes for a trip? They pack at 4am and throw in a pair of flip flops. No supportive arch. No English walkies. Old people wear Velcro walking shoes. What the fuck is wrong with me??? What do I care if my arch falls! Everything else has.

(moves across stage)

Now I walk around clinging to every railing I see leery of falling again. Gordon and I went to the writers conference in sun valley, Idaho, this year,…it’s a big conference with lectures by lots of famous writers. We go every year. Anyway, we’ve noticed there seems to be a little “graying” going on….it looks like the average age of attendees is now 74….. anyway, the lectures take place in a big amphitheater where u walk down stairs into the hall. As Gordon and I entered, we looked down into the hall. And saw a big glut of people. there was actually a waiting line to hold onto the railing going down into the lecture hall. A railing waiting line. and we waited in it!!! I’m bringing this on myself.

(big swig of wine)

A lot of those people in the railing line didn’t live in sun valley.…but I feel sorry for the older ones that do. Omigod. In a ski resort town you have to exercise until you die. Can you imagine. You’d be exhausted. You’re 85 and you have to get up at 6 and do your required weekly trek up the ski mountain trail with the “boys” that are alive. On Tuesdays ride your road bike twenty miles to the crest of the mountain. And god forbid your birthday falls in the winter. You’d have to follow that age old ski resort challenge of skiing your birthday years in thousands of vertical feet. You’d ski 85,000 vertical feet on your birthday. Who wants to do that! Oh please! If you’ve lived there very long you’ve got a minimum of four body replacements: two knees; two hips. I read an article in the local paper about all the orthopedic surgeons there are in town now. More than the number of real estate agents!! They estimated that 62% of the town doesn’t have their own body parts. And because ski resorts are at such an altitude….you can’t breathe!!!

(stands)

well…I can breathe… but I can’t squat anymore. I can’t squat. Can you guys all squat? How many can squat? (raises hand) Oh fuck, of course you can. Not squatting is a problem. Gardening is out. Of course, I don’t garden anyway. My husband and I did some accounting and figured out we paid a gardener about $500 a carrot last year to garden for us. But at weddings, squatting counts. I went to a wedding recently and it was time for the dancing. At weddings a lot of people stand in circles and shimmy to the floor. “louie loui” comes on and they shimmy down. (demonstrates; looks down) I’m left standing up like a giant redwood in a mowed field, (stands on tip toe dancing; arms raised), totally alone, when everyone else is on the floor. squatting. Fuck.

(sits. Drinks wine)

I bet Oprah can’t squat. I heard her being interviewed recently. She was being asked that at the end of her life….would she have any regrets. She was quiet. Pondered. Serious. And then she said, “yes, I’d regret not having solved my weight issues.” What????? Are you kidding me? She has changed the lives of millions of people around the world, built schools in Africa, is worth a bi-jillion dollars and she ends her life worrying about her thighs???

(jumps up. Goes to cake)

fuck that.….this cake is in defiance of that kind of thinking. it’s my favorite coconut birthday cake! (points to cake…eats cake?) Thousands of calories, buckets of sugar, glutin up the wazoo….and…buttercream. (starts to decorate cake). I remember being at my mom’s house when she had a big birthday. I was young.. disorganized and late as usual… so I stopped and bought one of those Sarah Lee cakes in the white box with the see-through top. Remember those? “nobody doesn’t like sarah lee”… and attempted to put her birthday’s worth of candles on it. The daughter home to celebrate the big day. The entire top of the cake caught fire. I don’t know what was in that frosting. I walked out of the kitchen, singing “happy birthday”, holding a bonfire!! My mother was horrified. Omigod. But I learned my lesson. So, this time, we have a cake big enough for 70 candles. With non-flammable icing.

(back to frosting the cake)

My driver’s license expired recently. No big deal. But the clerk asked me about organ donation. A question I’ve been avoiding and dreading. Particularly now. I’ve always had a sense that if I die, when the time is right, I will rise from the dead. So I’m afraid that if I do this organ donation and end up rising from the dead, that I won’t have any organs. So I won’t be able to walk around and chat. Because I won’t have a liver…or any spleen. And it’s a time in my life when I’m putting a lot of hope in the rising from the dead thing. Jesus did it. He just rolled the boulder over and wandered around for forty more days! So I just don’t think I’m going to be able to do the license/organ donation. Plus, if I end up in a firey crash on a greyhound bus, and I’ve signed that organ donation form, the paramedic wants me dead because his mother only has a few weeks left and needs my kidney. Fuck. I know….we all face these questions.

(slow sip of wine)

Then there are the things that you have always done in life that you never thought would end up dating you. Labeling you. But now they do.

(sits)

I’ve always watched the CBS , network, evening news. Embarrassing huh. What under seventy person does that? Right? But it feels good. Sort of like my parents used to do every night. Comforting. A routine. A glass of wine. I see what the world sees on the news. The slant they’re taking. It’s mainstream…not the fancy BBC or snooty PBS News Hour with that dour woman. CBS has commercials. Which tells me this is an old person thing to do because all the commercials have people in walkers, wearing depends, with erectile dysfunction. It’s not really the commercials themselves or the medicines….it’s the side effects of the medicines! Have you heard those? The other day I wrote down some of them. And these were all on one show! Let me read these to you:

-fatal bleeding…you always want the word fatal in a list of side effects

-vision loss

-inability to move…like you’ve been dipped in plaster (demonstrates)

-thyroid cancer

-explosive bladder leakage…(demonstrates)

-a 48 hour erection…talk about chafing!

-and sudden death. Omigod.

Do you think we’re over-medicated?

(drinks wine)

I was talking to my therapist….catherine. in Great Barrington. And she was saying that western society places waaaay too much emphasis on achievement. The buddists don’t do this. They think of living in the moment. Living from the heart. Here we’re judged by the money we make. Success. Power. Go. Go. Go. It’s all fucked up.

But, if we’ve followed this idea all of our lives, what are we supposed to do in our seventies? That go go, is gone gone. Tough to get a job. We’re technologically impaired. Tough to be an entrepreneur…it takes too long. And we’re tired. Social security and medicare have made us into wards of the state. We’re told it’s over. And yet we still have this continuing, inbred need to achieve.

A wise person told me that life is divided into thirds. The first third has to do with parents and siblings. Being part of family; separating from family. The second third is outside of self. Being out in the world. It has to do with being a professional, a spouse, a parent. But the last third, for those that are truly brave, is, by far, the most rewarding. It’s about you. Unencumbered. Becoming who you were meant to be. Following your passion. Your dreams. You have a lot of time. Go for it!

Many people can’t do this. They simply recover from the 2nd third….as if life has already played out. they retire. They’re living on the golf course, taking care of grandchildren, doing jigsaw puzzles, reading, napping, trying to be better at what they’ve been doing.

I’m a late bloomer. I don’t know what I’ve been doing all these years but I still have to make a mark for myself. I’m not done. I’m writing. I have these shows to do. A book? Book tour. I still have a lot to do. I figure I have thirty more good years. But everyone says it’s too late? Too late for me? I don’t buy that.

So I went online to find people that found success and started their achievement years after 70. To prove to the naysayers that it can be done. There must be some late bloomers like me! I found six of them. Let me read these to you….

Edmond Hoyle, the expert on the rules of card games, “hoyle’s rules”, who wrote his hit book, “treatise on the game of whist” at 70 and worked for another 27 years. Playing whist! I’m surprised he didn’t die of boredom!

Duncan Hines…the cake man.

Colonel Sanders…the chicken man

Grandma Moses, who was 76 when she did her first canvas and worked for 25 years after that. 76? That means I have 6 more years to lie around!

Laura Ingalls Wilder, the lady with the little house on the prarie

and Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the Hare Krishna. (sings hare Krishna song) Remember those guys in the orange outfits who ran around ny selling flowers? He apparently came to the US in 1965 with just $50 and a pair of cymbals. Of course he had to start hare Krishna!

All late bloomers!

Now you probably noticed who I left off of this list. The 70 year old attempting to bungle his way from being an entrepreneur to being president of the united states. Oh brother. Well, I left him off because I just don’t think women are going to let that happen. I know I’m not. Did you hear what he said about age and women? Did you? He called thirty a “perfect age” for women….but added that when a women turns 35…it’s called “check-out time”!!!! check-out time????? Omigod. With this birthday I’m now twice his maximum age of acceptance. Twice! Good thing I can show him, on the first tues in november, that I still have the power to break his balls!

Ohhhh. I’m hot. (drinks wine) last week there was a woman on NPR…I think that “science Friday” show….she was 90 and still having hot flashes! That’s going to be me!

I don’t know what it is with old people moving to warm places. I mean, let’s put it out there….aging women don’t look good in hot places. that’s why the moo moo is in existence. that’s why middle eastern women are thrilled to be wearing a black berka in august.

(stands…walks to middle of stage)

We rented a house in Antigua last year. Fourteen family memebers. it was 95 degrees. my daughter and stepdaughters, each weighing 100 pounds apiece, wore a whiff of coverage. A whiff. Mini sundresses in pastels with little tie straps at the top. Ethereal. Like u see in “Glamour”. ahhh.

I wore… a long skirt, tank top, linen over shirt, two pounds of sun block, brimmed hat and white bierkenstocks. I looked like I lived in a cold place governed by Shirea law.

I was really hot.

(moves to stool by cake. sits)

And finally, I had to go in the water because I was about to die of heat prostration. I was on the beach waiting for everyone to start reading or build sand castles with the kids or at lease look down so I could run to the water in my bathing suit. i couldn’t stand it any more…..when I heard the far off voices of Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan in my head. (looks into distance. changes voice) “ go on. go on. don’t let the judgmental eyes of society keep you from indulging in those cool, azure waters. You are you. a mature-bodied woman. Hanging chads and all. Go. Go you little pear”.

I’d finally choose a time when everyone was distracted, wear my coverup to the edge of the water, drop it and plunk in. necessitating abandoning the critical step my mother taught me…and all of u should know this… to hold my wrists in the water so that my body temp would adjust to the cold and I wouldn’t have an immediate coronary. but I couldn’t do that because I can’t fucking squat!

This is not going to get better now that I’ve turned 70. Hot places are out. Forget Florida . Tax haven or not.

(stands. decorates cake.)

Florida came up when I was redoing the will. A pre-requisite for turning 70 is reexamining the will. Who wants to do that now? You have a bad feeling you could actually need it.

It’s a morbid subject. Flies in the face of the rising from the dead thing. You don’t want to deal with all that legal-speak. You wanna give money while you’re still around. But you don’t know how long that is. You’re not sure who you really like and not sure u want to leave them anything anyway. That’s why Leona Helmsley left all of her money to her dog. Trouble. That was his name. she left him twelve million dollars. She knew it takes a lot of money to support a dog. The judge reduced it to $2 m. he had to go on food stamps. Poor trouble died recently. I wonder who he left his money to? Maybe the government took it. You know, if you don’t do something the government takes half of your money. Which means you’ll probably have to move to Florida. With that old person hot thing. Florida. Omigod. Shoot me now.

(moves to middle of stage)

Then there are senior rates….which actually started in talahassee, florida. Yup. Did you know that? When Gordon and I go to the movies, he always gets the senior rate. For both of us. He sort of flaunts it. Puffs up. “Two seniors please.” I cringe and run to the end of the line, pretending I’m not with him. I never get a senior rate. I pay full freight. I consider it a donation. But if he’s with me I have to. Or I look like a spendthrift.

Only one good thing has come out of this. At the supermarket, guidos, they offer a senior discount on Mondays. 10 percent. One Monday we had houseguests and I was buying a lot so I broke down and whispered to the cashier. “you can put that on the senior rate”. And she asked for my license. She carded me!!!!! Wow! Wow! I was thrilled!!! Of course that’s kind of warped. Why do I care how old the checker at guidos thinks I look??

(moves to other stool)

I’m not proud of it but I’m always reading articles on how not to look old. I always read those things. Don’t you? The other day I read an article that didn’t involve lotions, potions, or surgery. They said one of the best ways to look young was to text with your thumbs. Do u do that? The kids all do! Otherwise you’re dating yourself. I can’t do that! I only have one friend who can do that! I squish all the letters with my thumbs. So I date myself and hunt and peck. I was talking to a friend involved in hiring for a big company. She said she judges people by their e-mail addresses. She does. If u have yahoo, like I do, or aol…you’re out!!! It means you’re older and not tech saavy. And you don’t get the job. She actually threw those resumes away. I’m fucking judged by my e-mail server!

Of course I’ve always been judged by my kids.

(pours more wine. Drinks a few sips)

Gordon has a theory that when you’re older you’re now in the back seat of the family car. your children are driving, and only see you occasionally in the rear view mirror. They’re looking ahead.

(stands)

That’s why I say older people should buy two-seater sports cars. No room for kids. And fast! I mean, don’t buy one of those old, undersized ones. Like we had in college. Like an MGB, triumph or fiat spider convertible. Older people look kind of like big blowup dolls spilling out of one of them. I had a fiat spider when I was pregnant with the twins and drove it very slowly into the side of a San Francisco city bus because I couldn’t bring my leg up to reach the brake with my enormous belly. Bus driver was amazed. Particularly when I had to pry myself out of my car. Had to sell it after that. I bought a normal sportscar a few years ago. And love to drive fast. Got two tickets in one day a few years ago going over 90. Didn’t lose my license though because I called a woman who worked for me, immediately after the second ticket and she went online and took that test in my name where you can reduce your tickets by one. Do you know about that? Which she finished before my second ticket got registered…and I didn’t lose my license. Smart huh? But I still love to drive fast. When we first moved to the Berkshires, I noticed there are a lot of curvy New England back roads. So every time I’d go to the store, I’d take a side road home and drive really fast belting out Elton john. Jump out of the car dancing when I got home. With the radio blaring. I still do that.

My son Sam used to laugh at me for that.

God….I wish he were here. But we lost him two years ago. At age 25. He would have been here. Sitting over there. Hi sam. Thinking to himself…omigod now she’s old…. and crazy! But giving me a little thumbs up with his eyes. I haven’t really been able to write the last two years. This is my first attempt. And you are my victims. I’ve had a lot of therapy which has helped. My therapist has taken me back into my heart as a way to heal and be safe. And see the world from that vantage point. It helps… but my heart is broken into a million pieces and lying on all those jagged shards is so painful. I know that the hardest part is what will never be. The wedding toast I won’t get to write, holding his first little girl….maybe twin girls… getting that excited call about his new job at NPR…feeling his hand in mine, a little later in life, when I’m a little wobbly.

(sits on stool by cake)

Gordon says that life is learning to live with loss. I think that’s true. Particularly now. But I may always be a poor student.

(walks over to stage right)

My daughter Lily reminded me the other day that I told her last year that she’s now solely in charge of continuing my bloodline. Making me eternal. Which I thought was funny. She’s horrified! She thinks babies are sort of creepy and scary. I may be out of luck in the eternal department.

(sits by wine)

But it all got me thinking. Lily doesn’t really know the back stories about me. None of our kids do. She just knows the stories I’ve told her . The resume. “advertising in NY and San Francisco. Writing. Radio host, one woman show…”. There was a movie called “Amelie”. Amalie talked about the things she secretly loved to do. Like feeling the sensuality of slipping her hand into a tall bag of cool dry beans when she went to the green grocer. Those things. The things no one talks about. Which made me wonder. What are my “cool dry beans” stories? The stories I don’t talk about. The ones my daughter doesn’t know. So I thought I’d make a list for her.

“Dear Lily…”

-I hate kale.

-I used to be be wild. I got put on probation my first semester in college. I was drinking and painting by number during exam week.

-My first sexual partner was joe hunting. We snuck into his parents weekend cabin in the winter and almost froze to death. I remember the shadows on the wall.

-I loved drugs but was afraid of LSD

-I like it when I’m in the pool and go under the water with my hair floating around me and all of my body parts raise up.

-I’m self deprecating. Always turn the joke on myself. I feel I have to.

-I like my friends. A lot. Laughing with friends. A lot.

-I hate kale.

-When I fall on my head I always say, “Brigham Young led the Mormans to Utah”. If I remember to say that, I know I don’t have brain damage.

-My favorite movie is “Harold and Maude”. My favorite group is Queen.

-I like information… books on tape about history. Letters from soldiers in the Civil War.

-I have ennui. I’m slow paced. Often stuck in the mud.

-I don’t remember many of the details of my life. I don’t know why that is.

-I’m not an athlete.

-When I get on a plane I always turn to the map in the airline magazine. I love maps.

-My favorite New Yorker card is the one with the bear holding a menu in a formal restaurant. He looks at the waiter and says, “I think I’ll have the garbage.”

-I’m unsure about things.

-I put Q-tips in my ears when I get home after an airplane trip. And slowly pull them out. ahhhhh. Orgasmic.

-I like minimalist houses. Topiary balls. And white.

-My inseam is 34.

-I really hate kale.

gordon asked me what I think I’ll do next. What my passion is.

Hmmm. Writing. I finally said. When I’m writing. “Dogs? Birds? “Do u want a parrot”, he asked. “No”.

I think I want to know myself well enough to know what my passion is. God. Isn’t it time? It’s probably writing. But maybe if I learned to draw it could be that. Or I could make a film. Do I have to decide now because I’m old….have a complete, buttoned up profile of who I am that I stick to? Because my story is already told? …or can I keep looking? Or is that too messy?

The same with finding my spot…Georgia O’keefe felt that being in an environment that feeds your soul is critical in life. She lived in thirty places before finding her beloved sonoran desert. I’m still not sure what environment resonates with me . Feeds my soul. Being here…in a cozy farmhouse in Stockbridge? Being in the mountains of Idaho, so awesome and craggy? A grey shingled Nantucket house looking out at the mist and boats. Bali? Colorful bali? Will I always keep looking? Because I still don’t know.

(pours more wine. Drinks a few sips)

There’s so much to think about…..

(stands. Walks to center of stage)

So, I decided I needed a theme for this birthday. That would help. Something to live by. Hang my hat on. I used to be in marketing. I should be able to think of something. Like when CNN dubbed that horrendous war in the middle east, a milder “operation desert storm”. I should be able to make fresh lemonade out of a bowl of aging lemons.

And finally, this morning, I got it. Gordon and I were having breakfast. A little tea and toast. Gordon was in charge of the toast. But when Gordon butters toast, he just puts a few scrapes of butter in the middle of the bread. “there”, he said. “here’s your toast.”

“No, no”, I said. “You can’t leave it in the middle. That’s not enough. You have to butter to the edges”.

(voice builds in intensity and decibels.)

I realized in that moment, that that’s my theme for my life going ahead. I’m not going to leave it where it is. Being seventy doesn’t mean the butter stays in the middle, unspread. I’m going to keep going. Swim naked in those azure waters. Embrace my gravity. Pursue my passions. Slowly but surely covering every bit of that toast. Not missing any of it. I’ve got thirty years! hI’m going to butter to the edges.

That’s it. That’s my theme line. “You’re 70. Butter to the edges!!!!”.

“hey wait a minute!” (jumps up and adds “butter” under the pluses on board)

butter!!

ok…. Now…for the butter cream!!….(runs to cake, house lights go down, she lights it!)

speak to me paul!!!!!

(play “they say it’s your birthday”….(beatles song))

(mary dances. Streamers shot on stage and at audience.)

(encourages audience to dance.)

end.