

Dear University of Iowa Students,

The question: “What do I know now that I wished I had known in my twenties?” My answer: “Some days, not very much!” (Are we ever to be so smart as we thought we were in our twenties??)

Despite that, a few bits of wisdom that would have come in handy 50 years ago:

- Take risks.
- Set goals.
- Savor relationships.
- Plan for retirement.
- Create a healthy lifestyle.
- Recognize gratitudes.

Don't be afraid of risks. *Advice:* Select a major or career field that stimulates and excites you, not necessarily what gains approval of others. Use good judgment. Keep a sense of humor.

I was an English major with a teaching certificate (very safe, limited alternatives in 1955). Much later, at age 70, when a friend asked me what I might have chosen instead of English, without hesitation, I answered “accounting.” Now, that had never occurred to me. Back then, if we didn't meet our life partner prior to graduation, with a teaching certificate, at least we had something “safe” to do, that we could always “fall back on.” Teaching was definitely not for me. Yes, I would have liked to become an accountant!

Set goals. *Advice:* Realistic goals, YOUR goals, not what others want you to do (maybe a few unrealistic ones to add a little spice to life). Good choices, but don't rush! Don't take yourself or life too seriously!

Goal setting wasn't a hot topic in the 1950s. What a difference my career path might have been with some goal setting. Three years of classroom teaching led me to pursue my master's degree in student personnel administration, which then led to college and university administration and finally to administrative posts with two major educational associations. The academic arena was safe, with many challenges, some disappointments, though enjoyable most of the time. I realize now there were many challenging and exciting possibilities in the non-academic world that I never experienced.

Savor your relationships. *Advice:* Love those who bring meaning and fulfillment to your life. Savor these and remember to tell them often that you love them. Seek out people who are different from you, enjoy what they have to offer. Learn from the seniors in your community.

I have been blessed with many special friends these many years. When I terminated my long-term relationship that did not end in marriage after I understood how unhealthy it was for me, good friends gave me the courage to do so. Have I missed not being happily married? Hell, yes....but, there's still time! It's a little late to start a family, but I can enjoy others' children after they've been house broken.

Plan for retirement. *Advice:* Don't wait, do it now! I was certain in my twenties that I had years (forever maybe?) to think about life after retirement, income to support my life style, a place to live, etc. Among other things, I never considered that things like savings or investment plans would come in handy some day, or that there was little or no plan for the future. Sometimes we cannot control circumstances. Sometimes we can. Life comes at us very fast!

Through a lot of hard work (thanks to that Iowa farm work ethic) and some good investing, I accumulated a smallish portfolio. My income includes modest investment dividends as well as retirement plan and social security. Reality accompanied by sticker shock in recent years has meant part-time employment to fill the gap between expenses and income, less travel, fewer frills, more work, less leisure time.

Create a healthy lifestyle. *Advice:* Eat healthy foods. Exercise. Watch your weight. Avoid drugs and other toxic choices. Search for your spiritual path.

You won't always be a healthy, handsome, striking, drop dead gorgeous 25-year old. More than fifty years ago I gave little thought to living healthy or the impact this would have on my later life.

With a consistent, healthy lifestyle of good nutrition and exercise and moderation of alluring, but toxic, choices such as alcohol, drugs, fast food, sweets, smoking, etc., your aging process will likely look much different from mine. Though I consider myself very fortunate and still able to do many things I enjoy, I have been challenged with health issues that I know didn't just "happen" because I'm getting older. That's where personal responsibility comes in, and I know now that the choices I made early in life have come back around to greet me with health challenges.

When you're young and feel good, you don't think that what you do today is going to make a difference 20, 30 or 40 years from now, but I can tell you that it does. Without your health intact, everything else in life will seem very insignificant. So, if you remember one thing from this letter, I hope it will be this....Pay attention to how you treat your body, and stay well informed about health.

When you feel great – body, mind, and Spirit – the sky is the limit to what you can do with your life. I trust that you are up for great things!

Recognize gratitudes. *Advice:* Every day we have a choice: we can focus on what we don't have or give energy to what we do have. Being grateful for all the gifts, small to large, feeds energy to the good things in our lives, whether it be peace, fulfillment, joy, wealth, accomplishment, or healthy relationships. Being grateful promotes feeling good. From this place we are more likely to set important goals and reach them.

Consider making a gratitude list each day and see the impact it has on your mood, thought, and actions. Here is my gratitude list for today:

- I still have most of my marbles (short term memory a bit imperfect some days).
- I am grateful that I can still work. I have the benefit of years of experience.
- I can still see (with glasses), hear (with hearing aids), walk (even with arthritis), drive (soon to be 8-year old car, paid for), laugh (even about income taxes).
- I have a wonderful cat who loves me.
- I continue to learn about the law of attraction and how greatly it influences who and what I am and how I live.
- I am very grateful to be a HAWKEYE!

With warmest wishes,

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