

May 1, 2007

Dear Legacy Letter Project:

I turned 50 last year. There are a number of things I wish I'd known when I was in my 20's. Here are a few things that I have learned over the years.

As I have grown older I have learned that my relationships with family members, friends, loved ones, co-workers, acquaintances and people are the currency for a good life.

Developing and maintaining respectful, mutually supportive, forgiving and fun relationships with people is essential for a successful personal life and career.

In my current career as a state legislator, the relationships that people develop with each other make the world work. Laws do not get passed if people do not trust each other. So legislators and people interested in policy initiatives share stories and experiences that hopefully create trusting relationships. Over time these relationships can result in building a foundation for action.

The world is defined by people and their connection to one another. Our personal connections are how most of us find a job, a mate, a good doctor or mechanic and the best place to eat vegetarian food. We rely on each other for advice and support.

Relationships need to be nurtured. This takes work. This is especially true when people disagree or simply don't get along. In both private and work life, you might disagree with a friend or colleague today and they may be your best friend and ally tomorrow. Life is long. Just when you least expect it someone you might not have treated particularly well may reappear in your life. This happens more than you might think. Simply put, don't burn bridges.

One of the biggest joys in life is having good friends. While I have a number of old friends from the past 30 years, I wish that I had maintained a better connection with more of my college friends over the years.

There will be disappointments and challenges ahead. Illness, divorce and the death of loved ones are all part of life. Surrounded by good friends and family these events can be more easily overcome and absorbed.

The final thing I have learned is the need to take care of your physical self. If you are lucky you will grow old. Good habits developed early around exercise, adequate sleep and healthy stress reduction will all contribute to a strong body later in life. Don't forget the sunscreen!

Time moves on. Your AARP membership form will soon be in the mail! Fight for what you believe in, love those around you, and live everyday to the fullest!

All best,

Joe Bolkcom  
State Senator  
Iowa City