

Fiftyeight: My Best Birthday Ever

By Pat Hanson born Patricia Ann Wilkin - March 1, 1945

'This lord -- or something better!' my new thought, evangelical, firespeaker of a minister, Reverend Deborah often says. It's become a favorite mantra of mine, but recently I switched it to 'this god AND something better.' However, after this past weekend, I'm not sure much better my life can be!

Thank you god, thank you Larry my well found and continually re-discovered Significant Equal. Thank you ME for creating a life this good. *Even More Good Happens* as my license plate frame reads. I feel refreshed, renewed and ready to get on with my greatest work(s). Allow me to recollect and re-collect, a montage of birthday image moments, in hopes others get inspired to vision similar ones for themSelves.

Each year as my birthday approaches, a post-Christmas, dead-of-winter, "oh-my-god-I feel so old" depression usually slips in. To counter it in recent years, I have practiced saying aloud how old I am. Now, I don't really announce it like I'm proud, I just sort of slip my age into conversation when it comes up, practice saying that I'm fifty-eight (or thirty or forty-whatever). It helps me turn that dread of aging into acceptance, to swallow the reality of it aloud in tiny slices, days and weeks before the actual birth-date comes.

Then on *that* day, as I've done from infancy on, I get to celebrate mySelf as something really special. A "national holiday" my tai chi teacher calls hers, canceling classes to be alone together with her man.

Birthdays. In our house as a kid it was a day you didn't have to do anything you didn't want to. A day you could order the family's meals.

I remember smells of pork roast,
the mouth feel of tiny herbed potatoes,
see the six inch tall multi-colored-angel-food cake,
taste its pink whip cream and strawberries.

This year went way beyond that.
My best Birthday ever ... EVER!
I kissed Larry. Thank you so much!
He'd made the reservations, booked the cabin at Ripplewood,
decided we'd have massages at Esalen, eat dinner at Deetjens.
March, what a wonderful green month
to make the all of 36 mile trip to Big Sur,
a globally sought sacred spot, right in our own back yard.

Part One: Friday night: Belvedere martini's
embellish a two hour sunset at Post Ranch Inn ...
the setting a slice of the closest blend
between architecture and man
I've ever walked in and out of.
A five star sunset
made more readily "stare-able"
through our brand new polarized Bolle' glasses.
Back to the cabin for a feast of our own:
chicken, herb bread, chips and boursin,
lightly dusted with a bit of erotic foreplay,
ten minutes a quickie for us.
Down the road to witness, oh my god... experience,
the Big Sur Native Dancers.
Nine ladies in their finest baubles,
ringed fingers sparkling, blinking,

light streams of circles red and blue,
 hips scarved with gold coins, tinkling,
 bellies writhing, undulating, moving, moving,
 moving me, and over a hundred spectators
 to screams of pure pleasure.
 Ecstasy some would call it.
 And that was only part One.
 Asleep at midnight on February 28th,
 unaware of space and time,
 wrapped in our own brand of yours/mine/ours lovemaking
 that Larry and I so often, so spontaneously
 remember each other in.

Day two:

Over breakfast and candles I get to open presents
 between sips of champagne
 body creams and music
 a card designed by my graphic artist husband:
 me under a parachute
 para-sailing high above the Caribbean
 our honeymoon.
 'Life is for the Living!'
 His own poetry gracing its inside:

'To the 'whirlwind'
 I love to TRY to catch ...
 To the Face above the Fog ..
 To the ONE with whom
 I can dance and play ...
 To the ONE who challenges me
 To live life, each and every Day ...
 To YOU -- the woman I LOVE ...
 Life is for the living!

Let's Get It On!!

A Heart circling my beloved's name: LARRY
'The weekend is OURS!'

My body rubbed with oil, melted from within, held, cradled in sheets, pulled like a baby by a stork from one end of the massage table to another, gently twisted into fetal position, at first face down, my hands wrapped around my own shoulders, knots I didn't know I had, pulled out one by one from a leg, an arm, a foot. Up and down my back, inside my head, finding, removing lumps of tension I didn't even know I had. Pressure points on the back of my skull, another deep in my buttock, sent sharp bolts of surprise, bring sunspots to my closed eyes, but I breathe through it, knowing they'd soon be gone.

As my eyes opened, I peered through the circular window in the poured cement wall to a view of the coast, redwoods atop cliffs, green velvet hills framing the connection between earth and sky and remembered where I was. More sounds slipped in. Water moving, dripping across heated goldmarbled tiles as lovely bodies displaced mineral waters, made them shine, liquid hot springs dribbling down to a recycling trough at the window's edge. I sighed. Touch and sound and thought gone.

"Happy Birthday," a deep husky voice whispered me awake from wherever I'd been, dreaming.

I felt the round fat fingers of his large hand, cupping my ear.

My post massage haze so deep

it took all the energy I could muster

to lift my head from the terry cloth pillow he'd placed it on
light years ago,

to smile, to say thank you,

to form my right hand in a thumbs up sign.

For over an hour all I'd heard was waves slurping
showering rocks below Esalen's modern baths,

2003's counterpoint to ancient rendering
of Grecian goddesses draped in cloth,
carrying urns and pouring waters over human charges
Me the goddess recipient this time.

Mmmmm ... more sun on the clothing optional bodies, as in no one
wears any, deck. Delighted to see men, women of all sizes, ages,
shapes, just quietly relax together. Breathe in the view.
A nap back at Ripplewood and then to dinner.

Deetjens Big Sur Inn

Same now as it looked as a stagecoach stop
Way before I was born.

Classical music

complements the low beam ceiling,
wrought iron lamps, antiques,
live orchids growing from moss
in a basket at our table.
old photographs in the wall.

one birthday candle

stuck on the plate with the chocolate tart
the swirl of white chocolate and raspberry sauce
making a a painting.

The tart the perfect windup
after the chef's latest mouth feast:
a vegetable pot pie dying for a better name.

It's thin sliced julienne vegetables
in an herb gravy over puff pastry,
not only melted in my mouth,
but all the way down.

Down into a body
melted from the inside by an Esalen massage
like no other,

by hours of soaking hot springs into my soul,
forgetting for a few brief hours
everything but the sound of the surf,
the wind on my skin,
the feel of my muscles being unknotted by a master.

After dinner at almost eleven
Stars dotting the black new moon sky
We wind up at Ventana for a night cap
Almost deserted, its diners gone to bed.
The bartender hands us a leathered brandy list
and gifts me a taste of unbelievable \$124. Louis XIII
His generosity slides down my throat
liquid lava.
We take our \$10. Remy VSOPs out to the stars
Watch them slip into the horizon
Then we hear music ... can that be?
smooth jazz coming from the cliffs below us
Speakers hidden in the trees?
Wondrous.
Thank you god! We exclaim.
To this AND everything better.
I am so blessed!