

First published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on December 30, 1979

## **The old truths are the best truths**

It's difficult for me to believe, but in March I will have been writing this column for four years. When it began, my editor, in an introduction to that first column, explained that I was separated from my husband after a marriage of 11 years and living in center city with my two daughters, then ages 7 and 4.

A lot happens to us in four years. In my situation, following a two-year separation, there was a divorce and then a period of life as a single woman with two children.

During this time I struggled to learn emotionally what I had long before accepted intellectually – that the fear of change, the fear of the unknown, is far more terrifying than the reality.

Certainly these four years in my life have also affirmed my belief that each person is exceedingly complicated and that though there are universal qualities we each share, one person is truly different from any other he or she will ever meet. I have learned, too, that one of the challenges of growing up is to accept not only our individuality and humanity, but also that each of us is alone, alone to build the life that suits us well and meaningfully. In this pursuit there are many choices. And also there will surely be mistakes. Another challenge is to accept these mistakes, do what one can to right them and move on.

As things happen to each of us, happy and sad things, we are in the position to reflect about ourselves and others from these events. When my life changed after an 11-year marriage, I knew that I believed in marriage but that divorce was necessary. I also deeply hoped for another opportunity for love and commitment.

I've learned in these four years that there truly is something called luck. I used to think that if one worked hard, one would get lucky. I still believe hard work and not giving up – continuing to reach out when it's difficult and the pain is unbearable – helps to improve one's chances for luck. But there are no guarantees that one will meet a partner with whom there can be compatibility based on mutual needs and values and, on that basis, an opportunity to build a fulfilling life.

There are many I know who are truly happier unmarried. But there are also many I know who long for marriage and yet not finding it, build meaningful lives, successfully recognizing that the pain of an unhappy relationship where problems cannot be resolved and only intensify with passing time is far more difficult than living alone.

I am one of the lucky ones – I wanted a second chance for a successful marriage and received the opportunity to build one, for which I will always be grateful. On December 14 I was married in the home my husband and I will share. Our four children were with us.

My daughters are now 11 and 8. My husband's daughter is 13 and his son is 10. His oldest son died at the age of 17 before I met his father. But he is spoken of so often that in all of our hearts he was very much present on a day that, except for the days each of our children were born, was the happiest that my husband and I have ever known.

When feelings are very deep and precious and personal events very, very important it is difficult to talk about them, much less write about them. But for this new year, this new decade, as I wish you each joy and peace, I wanted also to share my happy news.