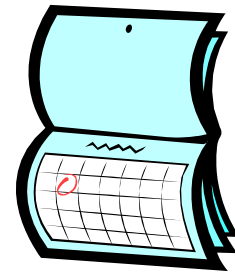


A CHANGE OF SEASON

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It's harvest time, clean up time, gathering time. It's time to put away the beach balls and the lawn mower. It's time to shake the sand from the shoes and store away the croquet set and find the storm windows. It's time to "put up" the garden's bounty and find someone who doesn't have enough zucchini. It's time to find the mittens and try on the sweaters and coats. It's time to gather nuts and firewood and to get out the soup pot and make stew. It's FALL and it's a time of preparing and finishing and putting away and getting out.



Fall in our family always meant another cleaning spree as MOM swept the summer sand from the porch and got us organized for the winter. We had to sort through our comic books and sea shells and colored stones, putting them away to make room for the school books and fall leaves we would soon be bringing home. It was hard to let go of the shells that we found while racing across the beach. It was hard to put away the stones we found while wading in the mountain streams. It was hard to put away summer, even if the coming fall meant new adventures and new friends and homework.

It was hard to change from summer to fall back then and it still is. I find myself not wanting to let go of the long, lazy, days of summer. I am not ready for the shorter days and longer nights, for the cooler winds and the

fall rains. I am not ready for sweaters and soup. I am not ready for another year to pass so quickly into memory.

I was just getting used to summer's slower pace and easy ways. I liked making supper salads and eating cherries and watermelon. I liked looking for shooting stars at night and hearing the crickets' call. I liked the soft breezes and the sunlight dancing through the sprinklers.

Of course, it was hard to get used to summer, too. I liked spring and its freshness and its promises. I liked peeking tulips and budding trees. I liked the smell of newly turned earth as we prepared the garden and I liked the lengthening days.

I liked winter, too, just as I liked last fall. It's the CHANGE that I don't like! It seems to take me longer each year to adjust to the new season. Maybe it's because I am older each season and I have to remember that. I don't like the years going by so quickly either. I can't seem to catch the hours and days and weeks and months any more. They slip by so fast that I am 3 years behind. Where did the seasons go?



It was just summer the last time I looked out the window and now it's fall and soon it will be winter and then spring will catch me by surprise and pretty soon another year will have rushed by. I've always been on of those: "TAKE CHARGE" kind of people and now I seem to be in charge of nothing!

Why can't I seem to hold onto anything any more? I've lost countless mittens, my waistline, memories, days, checkbooks, umbrellas, my mind and you. I want to stop the clock and push back the seasons and just STAND

STILL! I want to hold you again and trace the outline of your face with my fingers, pushing back that lock of hair and memorizing your smile. I want



to hug you again, tight, and feel your arms around me. I want to hear you singing in the backyard and see you running down the street, chasing the cat. I want to sit down in the summer's grass and make daisy chains with you and spit watermelon seeds. I want to wander through the fall woods

and jump in leaf piles and toast marshmallows and watch football. I want to throw snowballs and make angels in the snow and build a snow fort. I want hot chocolate and doughnuts and to share a quilt and a good story with you.

I want to hunt for four leaf clovers with you and plant flowers and a vegetable garden. I want you back in my life...NOW and for all seasons. I don't want empty spaces at the table or quiet sounds in the house. I want YOU, you to share my todays and my tomorrows. I want YOU. I always did and still do.

And it's this emptiness that makes the change of season so hard. There's no one to share the chores with now and no one to help the way you did. Putting things away reminds me of the day I had to put your things away and this, like every other season, becomes the season of sad.



But the seasons keep coming and going and I am still here. I think I'm beginning to see a pattern to this journey. Once I'm "in" the new season, I'm OK. It's just the beginning that is so hard. So maybe if I could

just jump right into the middle of fall or winter or spring, maybe if I could just not have to begin again every time, I'd be OK.



So, I think I'll go put up the holiday lights now and dye a few eggs. I'll make soup and fruit salad and get out the



scrapbooks and sit with my always knew me best. I've got your pictures out and I'm wearing one of your shirts. Feels good because it's a bit chilly in this fall air.

Ah, a new season...a new way of looking at things and of remembering the joy we shared. I don't want to miss that anymore, so I think I'll just start remembering you as you lived, not as you died. And maybe that's the secret to each new season.... take inventory of what you've got, clean house and make room for what you want. Then jump right in and keep on dancing. You are the music in my soul and you are with me any time, all the time, no matter what the season.

