



Fifty Is The New Nothing: Starting over in the middle

Chuck Sigars

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“... I don't want to go to law school, or pursue another advanced degree, or change my career, which would be funny if I had a career to begin with. I might do all of those things come the next season, but this is summer and I'm about to turn 50 and suddenly I have the makings of a gym in my basement and it's clear to me. I want to be Batman.” --The Dark Knight of the Soul Some people age well. Others, not so much. When it came to turning 50, though, Pacific Northwest columnist Chuck Sigars realized it was an ideal time to start over. From his popular newspaper columns for Beacon Publishing, “50 Is The New Nothing” explores the possibilities, not the limitations, of aging. With his trademark humor, Sigars describes his adventures losing 100 pounds, learning to count calories and walk for miles, along with his discovery of exactly how many push-ups he could do (three). “50 Is The New Nothing” could also be a primer on aging gracefully, as Sigars explores the pitfalls and signposts on the road to old guy status, including which shirts should never be tucked in and how to avoid talking like a teenager. Divided into two sections, “Finding Fifty” and “Family Matters,” in the latter part of the book Sigars turns his attention to the ones that matter most, as he prepares for his daughter's wedding. Along the way, he takes a crosscountry road trip and finds out that home is where the heart is, as long as you know where home is and who is waiting for you there. Ultimately this is a story of discovery, told through the eyes of an ordinary guy who was surprised as anyone to hit the big Five-Oh. As he points out in the preface, this generation of Late Boomers might be the least prepared of any cohort for senior citizenhood. “We were never going to get old,” he writes in the introduction. “We were going to coast, drafting like Dennis Christopher in ‘Breaking Away’ (1976) behind the preceding generations and particularly technology, getting younger even as the years passed, picking up speed by virtue of being born on the cusp of a new era and reaching adolescence in an angst-free time.” What happens, of course, is what everyone experiences eventually, but told through the aging eyes of a man who decides to start over in the middle, just for the heck of it, and surprises himself, and us, with what he finds.

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