

Faith, Hope and Fiction

Connections

By Patricia Crisafulli

“My sister heard you on the radio,” the email began, “and I thought, how many Patricia Crisafullis could there be?”

And so closed a gap with a woman who had been my best friend in kindergarten and who remained so through elementary school, until our paths changed and then her family moved. We were in brief contact with an invitation to her college graduation party, about three hours from where I was living at the time; we exchanged a Christmas card or two, I seem to recall, a few years later. Then we lost track of each other.

All that changed a few weeks ago when a radio interview aired in Syracuse on a Sunday morning prompted her sister—whom I haven’t seen since I was about twelve—to call my old friend, who googled me, found my website, and sent an email. A broken connection was forged again.

“Trish, is that really you?” another email began. “I can’t believe it!”

Another friend with whom I had worked twenty-plus years ago in New York City tracked me down once again through my web site. Like me, she had been on the move for years, but covered more distance than I: moving to Europe, then back to the States, and finally returning to Europe. With her life changes and mine, we had lost touch with each other. I’d think of her now

and then, but our paths had diverged completely. Hearing her voice on the phone the day she called erased more than two decades.

The older I get, the more precious certain connections are, and the more determined I am to find the lost sheep of old friendships. In the case of both of these women, I, too, had been searching for them—well, sort of. They'd cross my mind; I'd sigh and wonder what happened to them. Then I'd be busy with something else. With Kathy, my childhood friend, I could not recall her married name. With Haifaa, I could find references for her in Google, but no contact information. Thankfully they were more diligent and I had become more visible. Maybe, on some level, I had sent out a homing signal on the spiritual plane. Or maybe, like someone lost in the woods, I had to sit tight and wait to be found.

The sad fact is we do lose track of people. In my tumultuous twenties, when a mercurial then-boyfriend occupied way too much of my time, and in my self-absorbed thirties I found it rather easy to let go of people who were not on my daily radar. It seemed too much of a bother or too embarrassing to touch base again. Suppose they were angry at me? Suppose I had forgotten a birthday? Or, I secretly feared, suppose they had wanted to be rid of me.

I always considered myself to be a good friend, but the fact of the matter is I don't keep up the way some folks do. It's a shameful realization that makes me comb through my contacts to see if there is someone whom I have been inadvertently ignoring. I vow not to let weeks turn into months and years before I reach out to those with whom I'm starting to lose touch. I certainly understand that lives change and relationships go through cycles, but I just don't want to wake up in twenty years and find out that people have gone missing from my life.

I suppose that's why Facebook is so popular with us Baby Boomers. We can keep track of people and experience the unmistakable thrill of finding someone you haven't seen since, say, high school. She hasn't changed a bit... Boy, I never would have recognized him...

If I go deeper, though, I know that being fifty and standing squarely in middle age is part of this phenomenon. On one hand, I don't want to lose touch with my youth. Like a lot of people, I want to be reminded of the teenager and 20-something I used to be—or at least the parts I choose to remember. On the other hand, there is that unmistakable sense of mortality, the knowledge that I'm not getting any younger. I can't wait to forge a broken connection or to strengthen a faltering one.

Thus far Kathy and I have caught up by email; a round of phone calls will be next. Then, perhaps, a trip back to New York State for me to see her and catch up in person and recall the two little girls who sat together on the school bus every day of elementary school. On Monday, I leave on a business trip to London which is where Haifaa is living now. In this curious twist of fate, I will be able to see her for the first time since 1989.

These connections from completely diverse parts and times of my life found me within weeks of each other. It makes me wonder who else might be looking for me, and for whom I should be searching. I suppose I will soon find out.