

Between TAMPAX and DEPENDS

Between TAMPAX and DEPENDS

Bertamae Anger Ives



© 2014 by Bertamae Anger Ives. All rights reserved.

Cover Illustration by Charles Bruce

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

Redemption Press is honored to present this title in partnership with the author. The views expressed or implied in this work are those of the author. Redemption Press provides our imprint seal representing design excellence, creative content and high quality production.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Tampax is a trademark of Procter & Gamble
Depends is a trademark of Kimberly-Clark

All rights reserved under the International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Written permission must be secured from the author to use or reproduce any part of this book, except for brief quotations in critical reviews and articles.

Additional copies are available from Amazon.com or the author.

Visit me on the web at www.bertamaeives.com AuntBertieAnger@gmail.com

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-853-3 (Print)
978-1-63232-854-0 (ePub)
978-1-63232-855-7 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2014951852



*In loving memory of my husband of
twenty-six years,
Reverend Richard Henry Ives,
whose friendly persuasion, teasing,
and loving changed my perspective
on many things.*

*Many thanks to my friend, Jeanne Treat,
for her editing advice and to the Northside
Writers Group for their input.*

BERTAMAE ANGER IVES

Bertamae is a teacher and organist who traveled extensively within the United States and to eighteen countries to work with relief organizations. She is an award winning author who enjoys writing and humor. She writes for the “My View” column of the *Buffalo News*, is the author of *Ring in the Holidays* and a contributor to *Doing Good For Goodness Sake*.

.....

BETWEEN TAMPAX AND DEPENDS

Inspiration for the mature woman.
A smattering of personal experiences
mixing humor with poignant insights,
designed to bless and entertain.

.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction xiii
A Mature Dilemma xv

Section One: Transitions

Why Can't I Be Sexy? 3
Naked in the Hall 5
I Know I'm Fifty Because..... 11
Rolling Stone. 14
The Five Thousand Dollar Makeup Mirror. 15
Clothes Shopping in the Middle Years 18
God Wants Your Trash 20
A Moving Experience 23
True Grit 26
Senior Citizens Texting Guide. 28
The *Cat in the Hat* on Aging 29

Section Two: Coping with Adult Children

The Eagle has Flown. 33
Booting Up Mom. 36

A Fur Coat for Christmas	39
The Art of Saying No.	42

Section Three: On My Own

Living Alone is not a Curse.	47
Dates From Hell	49
Caught Unaware	52
Dogs!	55
Alphabetical Actions for Aging Gracefully	58
God’s Protective Bubble	60

Section Four: A Woman’s Intuition

Too Young to Be Hitch Hiking.	65
When in Doubt, Don’t.	67

Section Five: Helping People

Life in the Slow Lane.	73
Clara Barton’s Second Career	76
Heaven’s Heroes	80
Not in Our Neighborhood.	82
 Wrap-Up	 89

Introduction

.....

A MATURE DILEMMA

I'm between Tampax and Depends; a mature older gal past fifty. I refuse to grow old gracefully. I'm fighting it every inch of the way.

My first clue was at the beauty shop a few years back. The girl scrubbed my hairline along my left cheek. Vainly she tried to scrub that large dark brown spot away. "I guess that isn't dirt, Mrs. Ives. What is it? A birthmark, perhaps?"

Like an aging ship, every two or three years, I need to be dry-docked at the dermatologist office for three to five appointments. The doctor burns and cuts with acid or liquid nitrogen - moles, tags, and ghastly lumps that keep reappearing. My crop of warts shows up in the strangest places: in between my toes, in my armpits, and behind my ears.

I fear that I'll wake some morning with a large mole with a gray hair blossoming on the end of my nose.

Between Tampax and Depends

“Damn that magnifying mirror! It catches everything.” It’s bad enough to know that a stray hair is growing, but quite another to see it well enough to grasp it.

My “birthday suit” has so many brown liver spots that I look like a second grader’s dot-to-dot workbook. Discolored, transparent textured skin reveals my varicose veins. This is God’s way of keeping me humble.

I’m grateful for such minor problems, when friends and relatives are facing debilitating life threatening strokes and cancers. Truly, I can live with such trivial problems! “Go ahead God, and tattoo me with liver spots and moles. I await my new crop of barnacles with joy. I’m your unique antique!”

SECTION ONE:

Transitions

.....

WHY CAN'T I BE SEXY?

Other people look attractive, but not me! I have been trying to look sexy or at least glamorous for years.

At sixteen my parents planned a Blow-out Birthday Party! They invited neighbors, relatives and my friends from high school. They purchased a stunning dress, with shoes dyed to match, and the house was filled with flowers. My chance to impress everyone was here. I impressed them all right. One hour before the festive event I tripped over the dog, spraining my ankle. My elegant celebration was half over when I arrived in jeans with crutches.

Back in the 60s I watched TV personalities and movie starlets step from their limousine holding a fur muff. That year my husband surprised me with one. Clutching a black seal muff when you're eight months pregnant just adds to your girth.

Between Tampax and Depends

The following year I decided a fancy red velvet dress for special occasions would be great. But it's hard being distinctive when you can't leave your home without dragging a diaper bag. They don't come in red.

Perhaps a slinky black beaded dress would do it. One hundred and twenty dollars poorer, my results were the same. Our couples club attended a dinner at a ritzy hotel. Yes, Calamity Jane wore the slinky dress - with my arm in a sling because of a tennis elbow.

In 1985, my extra cash went for a special hat for my son's *Boy Scout God and Country Award* ceremony. This one-of-a-kind brimmed hat was just what I needed. Then my dermatologist called and said he had a cancellation that same day. He decided to remove moles from my face. I kept saying, "Yes." At the end of the session to my surprise several bandages were put on. At the impressive ceremony people asked if I had been in an auto accident because three Band-Aids adorned my face.

Nobody noticed my new hat.

I'm doomed to going through life gaining attention for all the wrong reasons.

Life in the new millennium is different. I have to hurry to be glamorous. Soon it will be forever too late. Why? It's hard to appear sexy or fetching in orthopedic shoes when you're awaiting a hip replacement.

.....

NAKED IN THE HALL

I attended a Write to Publish Conference in the mid-west at an Evangelical School in Illinois. The crowd was close to three hundred people. So as a late comer, I was assigned to a corner room on the third floor of the old women's dorm, which lacked air conditioning.

The conference proved to be a succession of blistering days with heat of 94-96 degrees. So I slept without the damp confines of a nightgown.

When I woke up in the morning, it was pretty quiet at 6:30 A.M. I was just two doors from the rest room so I streaked down the hall in response to nature's call. I left my door wide open because the night latch was still on. When I returned a breeze had blown my door shut!

I knocked on a friend's door and hid my birthday suit, putting my one shoulder and my chin in the opening. "Hi Burnice, Sorry to bother you so early..." My friend was packed, her bags were locked, and the

Between Tampax and Depends

room was stripped of all linen. A cab tooted impatiently for her outside her window. I pleaded, “Can I use your phone to call security?”

She let me in. “Sure go ahead but what are you going to do when they get here?” she said with a giggle.

“Please, please loan me a...”

“I’m already late for my train. Use the phone and then lock the door when you leave.”

I phoned while she gathered her bags and left for the elevator. Running back to the restroom, I looked for anything. Even a dirty towel would do. No luck!

Maybe I could plaster my body with wet paper towels. Forget that! They would not stay in place. I had gained weight recently. It would take two dozen towels to cover me. Perhaps wrapping myself in toilet paper like a mummy would work. But I needed my arms free to wrap myself. The paper slipped off my hips. *I’m running out of time, they’ll be here any minute!* Thank God, I eyed the shower curtain. I sprinted back to Burnice’s room for a chair, then raced back to unhook sixteen rings and wrap myself in white plastic. Nonchalantly sitting on the floor, the door at the end of our wing opened.

Security had thoughtfully sent a female guard, with a ring of keys as big as a watermelon. I gave out a sigh of relief. This proved to be a mixed blessing! She began to snicker and burst out laughing. “Are you Mrs. Ives? You know the rules here on campus. Have you been drinking?” She then bent low over me to smell my

Naked in the Hall

breath. “Did you borrow your designer dress from the shower stall?” She dropped the keys. They hit the floor like a bowling ball.

Immediately, three doors opened. People poured into the hall and commented. “What’s so funny?” “What’s going on?” “Oh, my!” “She’s dressed appropriately for the weather.”

“Hey Helen, don’t you think this is a newsworthy event, for the conference daily paper? How about the ‘Bare Facts Column’? Right girls?”

I took fifteen minutes of teasing before the guard’s fumbling fingers found the right match for my door.

The panic I felt and the ribbing I took taught me an important lesson: if I ever decide to become a streaker again, I should take my keys!

Between Tampax and Depends

Transparent Woman
(my experience as a new widow)

The phone doesn't ring
The house is quiet

Friends tiptoe around me
Afraid to mention his name.

At a party, eyes pass over me like
I was an insect on the wall.

Harassing phone calls in the wee
Hours disturb my slumber.

People I danced with, ate with, golfed with,
Pretend I don't exist.

I am a silent reminder that

We are all vulnerable to that final call.

Diabetic Heaven

Hello!

Is that you Bertamae? an angel said to me.
Everyone's surprised you made it!
You've longed to be here for years
...and years.

Banana splits are straight ahead.
Pecan pie is on the left. Sundaes are
behind the blueberry pies.
On the left near the milkshake fountains,
mountains of 6-layer birthday cakes await you.
High calorie drinks are around the
throne of God himself.
Strawberry tequilas are free.
Help yourself!

See what the Lord has provided for you!
You got here somehow...
Though He noticed you did a lot
of cheating on your diet.
When it comes to overdoing it.....
Snitching truffles regularly is a sin!

We have mountains of candy bars,
puddles of apple sauce,
lakes of maple syrup over potato pancakes.
Licorice trees are near the rainbow.

Between Tampax and Depends

Gardens of nuts are growing in whipped cream clouds.
Hershey kisses hang from them.

Stones are made of hard candy.
Sink holes of hot fudge to dip Girl Scout
cookies in. Fences of candy canes guard bowls
of English trifle that wait for you!
Candied fruit petals adorn the flowers.

Go ahead!

Climb mountains of fudge fenced in with caramels.

Before you get started, thank the Lord. It is
time to enjoy your sweet rewards.

.....

I KNOW I'M FIFTY BECAUSE...

I know I'm fifty because... I no longer feel safe. Yesterday I saw a squad car waiting beside me at the signal light. With stunned surprise, I stared into the fuzzy bearded face of a young man who looked about sixteen. He might be the same age as my son. This green youth is my protection?

I know I'm fifty because... At the optician's, I listened to a sales pitch exalting the benefits of trifocals delivered to me by a fledgling salesman. He had a condescending attitude, and never in his short life had he ever worn glasses. Steaming with resentment, I rammed on a pair of glasses, wrote the check, and fled the store. Out in the mall, my stomach was churning and my vision was blurring.

"Mrs. Ives," yelled the youngster in hot pursuit. "Your vision is blurred because you have my demonstration glasses on!"

Between Tampax and Depends

Returning home I entered the house and discovered the extension phone off the hook and a cup of cold coffee waiting for me. Over the hill is bad enough, but my forgetfulness means I'm slipping into the sea of senility.

I know I'm fifty because... At the ticket booth for the movies, I keep hoping that someone behind the counter will argue with me because I look "too young" for the senior discount price. So far, that has not happened!

I know I'm fifty because... My get-up-and-go has deserted me! Touring a mall with fifty seven stores sounds like work to me. Sneaking in an afternoon siesta has suddenly become a wonderful idea.

I know I'm fifty because... When teenagers come to my door and offer to shovel my sidewalk, they must think I am too frail to accomplish it myself.

I know I'm fifty because... When traveling alone nobody tries to pick me up. I'm too heavy and too old!

What use to be "Hi Babe" from a friendly truck driver is now, "Hey, lady, where is 390 south?"

I know I'm fifty because... After my splendid vacation, three inches of exposed white roots appeared on my head where Clairol ash blond should be. That nervy waitress suggested the Wednesday Senior Citizen Special.

I know I'm fifty because... The flashy fall previews are not designed for mature figures. I need clothes that will camouflage my aging anatomy. Finding a swimming suit is a bigger challenge than I imagined.

I Know I'm Fifty Because...

One day shopping, I pushed through the hangers frantically looked for my size; only to spy two red Ping-Pong balls with four yellow straps dangling from them.

I know I'm fifty because... The "chick of the 50's" who used to wear four inch spiked heels all day now looks for a wedged heel shoe with a strap across the ankle. The young woman of the past that ran through a park or dashed through a department store now searches for an elevator. I watch with envy at O'Hare Airport, when oldsters ride in an escort cart from the parking lot to their departure gate.

I know I'm fifty because... At the high school open house night, I approached a mature man with a suit and tie who was my age. He looked intelligent and competent. Immediately, I introduced myself and launched into my son's problems with chemistry. He interrupted me to say, "That's interesting, but I'm Jim's dad. The teacher is the 'kid' with the Adam's apple and the red tie standing near the bulletin board."

I know I'm fifty!

.....

ROLLING STONE

- a quote by Allen

My hairdresser summed it up. "You know you are over fifty when you're on your fourth dog, and you have gone from the 'ROLLING Stones to gall stones!"

Mr. Allen Mascia

.....

THE FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR MAKEUP MIRROR

(my friend Jeanne tells this story)

When I was in my mid-fifties, my eyes were starting to fail. I purchased a lighted magnifying mirror to help me put on my makeup. What a mistake! When I peered in the glass for the first time, I noticed out of control eyebrows, blotches, wrinkles, fat pouches around my eyes, and a hair in my chin that looked like a piece of fishing line.

“Why didn’t you tell me I looked like this?” I asked my husband.

“I’m not answering that,” he said.

I was shocked at my appearance. When I looked in the mirror, I felt like saying, “Mom, is that you?”

I went to a Merle Norman studio and had my eyebrows shaped. Then I visited a plastic surgery practice that promised to restore my youth. I turned over \$2,000 for a series of six treatments – three chemical peels and three laser resurfacing sessions. The peels were

Between Tampax and Depends

uncomfortable but the laser treatments were downright painful. I remember thinking that the only difference between this and torture was that I could get up off the table. They did work, however. Twelve weeks later, my skin was as new as a baby's bottom.

Next, I addressed my eyes. An eye surgeon recommended a procedure called blepharoplasty, where she would remove excess skin, muscle, and fat around the eyes. It was outpatient surgery, so how bad could it be? With a bit of luck and a pair of dark glasses I would be as good as new in no time. It sounded good. I handed over another \$3,000. The day of surgery arrived and my husband brought me to the clinic. The procedure was relatively painless because they spent 45 minutes numbing me around the eyes. I came through it without complication, got follow-up directions, and was escorted into the waiting room.

My husband raised his eyebrows. "You stay right here. I will get the car."

I waited in the vestibule while he got our car. He parked it, escorted me from the clinic, and helped me into the passenger seat. Then he got back in the driver's seat.

I felt a trickle of body fluid drip down my cheek and wiped it with a tissue. Then I reached up to turn down the visor and take a look.

"Don't look at it!" my husband said. "It's bad."

I couldn't resist. I turned down the visor, opened the mirror, and stared at my face. I looked like I had

The Five Thousand Dollar Makeup Mirror

gone a round with Mike Tyson and lost. “Why didn’t you tell me I looked like this?” I asked, once again.

This time, he stayed silent.

It took a week before I looked human. I had to wear dark glasses most of the time. Young children feared me. Strange women offered to take me to a battered women’s shelter. I insisted to all that my husband wasn’t beating me. Eventually, I was healed and looked ten years younger.

Moral of the story? Beware the lighted magnifying mirror! It cost me twenty dollars. But in reality it cost me \$5,000.

.....

CLOTHES SHOPPING IN THE MIDDLE YEARS

My word! It is devastating to my ego to shop for a dress for a fancy affair. You know, like for an important party or my son's wedding. The silhouette in the department store three-way-mirror is hard to accept. Wide open necks, gray, pale pink in silk, satin, or lace are nice enough to clothe my grandmother for viewing in a casket. But they are not for me! The prices started at \$150. That would stress my budget.

I wanted a more youthful look, so I decided to get back to basics and get some new undergarments. I needed a better bra so my profile in the wedding pictures would be flattering.

Sitting naked to the waist in a chair in the 'Intimate Apparel Department', I wondered, "How do you put your bosom front and center when one breast is going east and the other is going west?" Worst of all, my stomach bulged out meeting my boobs on their way

Clothes Shopping in the Middle Years

south. My twenty-three inch waist of long ago had disappeared after nursing two babies.

I looked in the full length mirror in the dressing room. My breasts resembled two bags of marbles suspended from my shoulders and crowding under my arm pits. Oh, well. I tried on a new 38D bra to see if it would help. Much to my dismay, the bottoms of the cups were full and the tops were nearly empty. I had a gap so big that I could drop a tennis ball in the middle. I threw on my blouse and left the dressing room to show my girlfriend.

“Look Betty Jean, this bra has shop lifting possibilities! There is a four inch gap in the middle!”

We laughed so loud and long that the sales assistant appeared. “What’s so funny, ladies?”

I showed her the gap. “How can I go to my son’s wedding like this?” I returned to the dressing room and abandoned the bra. I eventually found something for the wedding.

Now, when I walk fast my bosom sways from left to right. Everything up front jiggles. Nothing short of surgery will correct it. As I age, it becomes less important. I have accepted my fate!

.....

GOD WANTS YOUR TRASH

Aging sometimes means we have to down size the accumulation of a lifetime. One day while having daily prayer, I reminded the Almighty how poor I was! With an overpowering awareness of God's presence, He convinced me of how rich I really was. I argued back until I took a long look into my attic, garage, closet, and cellar. Actually, I wasn't a very good steward of my possessions.

I had enough baby furniture to outfit a complete nursery. I prayed and asked the Lord who needed it. Three phone calls later it was gone to a needy family.

While doing dishes I began thinking about an almost new diaper pail and some baby clothing I had saved. One week later a young, between-jobs couple in my church were thrilled with my used items.

The Easter season was approaching. I removed from my crammed attic twelve Easter baskets, basket

God Wants Your Trash

grass, and stuffed animals. Off they went to a children's mission serving the inner city. I kept rediscovering things I didn't need want or use any more.

Pages of dog food coupons were mailed to me. I gave them to a crippled neighbor whose daily companionship of her dog means a great deal to her.

My thirty-year-old doll clothes, what a treasure from the past. These things would delight some little girl's heart. So, I washed and dressed all the naked dolls I found in our church nursery.

Old glass bottles jelly jars and canning jars went to a Glass Recycling Depot. Flowerpots, empty planters went to a nursery that filled them with plants to be donated to a town library. Artificial flowers, how I detest them. Off they went to a cooperative nursery school.

Odds and ends of tape ribbon, cookie tins, and scrap cloth went to a new nursing home for crafts for elderly patients.

Berry boxes, bushel baskets, and plastic cider jugs went to a truck farmer at a roadside stand. He was a stranger to me when I started emptying my car trunk. His dark eyes glared at me. His dentures slipped down when his mouth fell open. By the time I drove away he was smiling.

Why do I cling to things? Does it give me a feeling of security? Does all this stuff have an emotional value to me?

Between Tampax and Depends

My endless knickknacks! These dust catchers went to a flea market to raise money for a Christian day school in Buffalo, New York.

I had a brown coat I hadn't worn for three years. Through a coincidence, I met a young wife of a student pastor. She loved the coat. It gave her the warmth of encouragement. She and her husband looked forward to a life of service in the church.

What happiness I experienced making other people happy! Over the years, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust for buying and saving stuff had entered my life.

Now I have a new determination to travel light through this world and twice a year cut down on the accumulation.

Two old bikes, three pairs of shoes, six used rugs, and God had someone show up who needed them.

My life is richer because I got rid of my trash. Soon I had to move into a different community. God repaid my kindness. He brought to my new home helpful people with helpful information and opportunities.

.....

A MOVING EXPERIENCE

Moving is a difficult part of life. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. I moved fourteen times in my short life. That's too many!

My husband Richard was an Elder in the United Methodist Church. When your husband's boss says you're moving, you GO! Pay raises and promotions depend upon it.

My first task was always to enlist my kids and their friends to bring empty boxes home from the supermarket. But the best boxes were liquor store boxes - sturdy with lots of dividers. These boxes never failed to create the wrong impression about my husband, who took a lifelong vow of abstinence from alcoholic beverages. One moving day, a clutch of three ladies walked their dogs past my house, chuckling as liquor boxes were stacked in my driveway.