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Topic: Travel or When My Life Got Better



The Gates

My travel these days revolves around seeing my grandchildren, one born very recently and the other a healthy, happy, inquisitive two year old. One lives in North Carolina and the newest addition is in Chicago. I want to spend time and bond with them whenever possible so that as they get older I can spirit them away for a Granny-Auntie Mame-type adventure or two.

When I got divorced 20 years ago I relished my new found freedom and independence. My girlfriends were always surprised that I had no trouble taking off on my own to New York City or LA or Santa Fe. For one of my birthdays they treated me to a plane ticket to NYC to see the Christo Gates installation in Central Park.

It was a very early morning mid-February when I stepped out of the 59th Street subway station at the entrance to Central Park, having come directly from the airport. It was overcast and grey and biting cold with a sprinkling of snow on the bare tree branches, the rocks, the walkways, the

gardens, the fields and the sculptures in the park. It was pretty deserted at 6AM mid-week. It seemed I had it all to myself!! Over 7500 Orange Gates threaded and wove their way through the park in bright happy ribbons and every once in a while a breeze would cycle through and they would move and wave in unison, making them appear even more alive and vibrant. They seemed to be dancing and welcoming me as I wandered through this colorful maze alone. I felt a bit like Alice in Wonderland, expecting a White Rabbit or a Red Queen to appear at any moment.

While New York can seem inhospitably cold and barren at that time of year, as I visited the Gates often during my stay, they made it feel welcoming and oddly warm at most any time on any given day. The crowds began to increase as the end of its two week display approached. I had never seen so many people of all ages, classes and ethnicities, joyfully sharing this unique experience. It had a festive atmosphere without the usual trappings of such an event. It was simply Gates of Orange cloth leading you through the park to experience however you wanted. Nothing more. It was respectfully quiet but cheerful with parents or nannies pushing strollers with toddlers gazing up or reaching out at the bright Orange banners, little children cheerfully running along the pathways, teenagers jumping up to touch the bottom edge of the Gates and older folks taking it all in, enjoying being out and about, savoring the beauty of art bringing people together. Everyone seemed to be smiling and sociable. There were even volunteers scattered about offering little scraps of leftover material as a keepsake. I happily accepted a piece to bring home to make thank you notes for my friends with a photo and a piece of the lovely Orange Gates.